

What teachers think about assessment in the Visual Arts: searching for authenticity.

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Abstract

This research reports on what classroom teachers think about assessment in the visual arts, using interviews with classroom teachers, ethnographic research data and case studies. The author speculates as to the emergence of an "assessment industry" in the sorting, ranking and comparison of students' artworks by teachers in the local context of the classroom. Emergent categories from the case studies, comprising assessment as authority, rites of passage, a form of exclusion, credentialling, formulas and self-serving activities are placed against traditional assessment theory and alternative proposals. Of particular interest is 'authentic assessment' which provides a point of comparison with the author's research findings about complexity, teacher autonomy and local views of assessment. This presentation focuses on understanding the procedures and hidden roles that assessment plays in the selected example.

Introduction

My research investigates evaluative practice in Visual Arts in three secondary settings in New South Wales, Australia and was conceived and developed from my secondary school teaching experiences. The origins of the research lie in a sense of anxiety, art teacher guilt and frustration and focus on the perspective of the visual arts teacher. Practical, unique and localised difficulties arise for art educators when they undertake evaluation/assessment in their art classrooms, as competing assumptions about the nature of art, education, evaluative practices, tutorial conventions and system requirements may result. The naturalistic study as outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1981 & 1985) was chosen as an appropriate qualitative method for an analysis of what I believe are conflicting evaluative paradigms in art education. This presentation describes a snapshot of the range of additional functions, kinds and meanings of assessment within the context of the classroom from the perspective of selected visual arts teachers. The term evaluative practice was used in my research title and work to signal an interest in uncovering emergent difficulties and vagaries when working with evaluation and assessment in visual arts classrooms. Boughton (1994) highlights the complexity when he states, that evaluation and assessment are "... a frequently misunderstood and often neglected aspect of visual arts education." (Boughton, 1994, 1).

From my experience the provision of definitions about evaluation and assessment from policy documents, the research field were either confusing, inadequate for the task at hand, ill fitting, poorly structured and were often utilised indiscriminately by teachers in the practices of their everyday working lives. It was difficult to reconcile many assessment policies and practices with much of the work I did as a visual arts teacher. In my work in visual arts classrooms textbook definitions about evaluation, assessment, standards, profiles, pointers, normative, criterion and the myriad of other assessment words and terms, were unhelpful in everyday work. It was more than just the difficulties of being a visual arts

teacher in a secondary school full of other subject disciplines and assessment methodologies. It was also about the challenges faced in attempting to address in an 'authentic' way the system documents such as syllabus and examination requirements which frequently bore little relation to my work with students. For example, my employer required links to be made between policy documents, the syllabus, my programs and lessons, however, often it felt like the links were established just for the sake of it, rather than dealing with anything real and tangible about teaching and learning in a classroom.

The inspiration for my research is the practical dilemmas, that arise for art educators when they undertake evaluation in their art classrooms. Brown (1991,13), points to a similar practical dilemma: "When different poles of knowing in art are forced together...". This dilemma he suggests, results in art teacher guilt: "a conflict between assumptions about the nature of art, and tutorial convention". The problem suggested in manifest in many aspects of art pedagogy.

In an earlier paper titled *A Dilemma for Art Educators: Evaluative Practice (1993)*, I outlined several practical examples of the difficult choices and complexity surrounding assessment for art teachers. Recent examples of the increase in government sanctioned testing in New South Wales include the excessive focus on 'Outcome statements' in the NSW Stage 6 Visual Arts Syllabus (1999) and the controversial union bans on ELLA, or English Language and Literacy Tests for Years 7 & 8. The New South Wales Teachers Federation placed bans on the 2000 ELLA tests after the Department of Education and Training in August 1999 announced that the allocation of Support Teacher Learning Difficulties, or STLDS for 2000 would be based on the Year 7 ELLA results. Such testing regimes and threat of fines unless the test go ahead, represent rational attempts to make evidence public, however as media reports by Gerard Noonan (2000) and David Humphries and Julia Baird (2000) comment, rather than teacher resistance being about "ideological resistance to the notion of uniform testing" (Carr in Humphries & Baird, 2000) the tests were opposed because the allocation of specialist teaching staff would be based on student test results. As an ESL teacher comments in a letter to the editor (Margolis, 2000), "Every teacher knows which students need literacy support. ...We don't need more testing; we need more teachers." Planned testing regimes may enhance government accountability by publishing results however, basing staffing and curriculum decisions on assessment targets is a challenging assessment environment for teachers to be working in. Questions such as: are teachers 'authentically' using assessment to drive new approaches to content and teaching methods or is the push for accountability and measurement the focus of recent changes to curriculum become increasingly important for teachers. In the current accountability context of increased government sanctioned testing, controlling for teacher error seems implicit in the dialogue of reform, outcomes and assessment and reporting. Torrance discusses the context and argument about recent curriculum and assessment change in the book 'Evaluating Authentic Assessment' (1995).

Teachers thinking about, using and understanding assessment

According to Torrance (1995)

'Authentic assessment' is a generic term which is gaining international currency to describe a range of new approaches to assessment. The basic implication of the term seems to be that the assessment tasks designed for students should be more practical, realistic and challenging than what one might call 'traditional' paper-and-pencil tests. (Torrance, 1995, 1).

Torrance identifies other terms which also identify new approaches such as 'performance assessment', and in the UK 'coursework assessment' or 'school based assessment'. He

goes on to mention 'practical assessment' in the context of a changing curriculum. In the discussion so far Torrance has outlined five terms used to describe new approaches to assessment. This in itself represents a new complexity dependent on the implementation of more challenging curriculum, geography, government policy and changes in 'intellectual and professional perspectives'. The new approaches have emerged 'the context of intense political debate about the accountability of education services ... and in what ways changes in assessment practices and procedures can contribute to educational reform and raising 'standards'". (Torrance, 1995, 1-2). The changing relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is also explored by Torrance as is the interest of Government and the 'ways in which assessment can influence and even control teaching, and in the changes in curriculum and teaching which could be brought about by changes in assessment." (Torrance, 1995, x).

Herein lies the debate for teachers, assessment agencies and curriculum developers. Should changes in assessment 'come *first* and lead (or even 'drive') the curriculum by:

- Broadening the scope of the assessment system and
- Increasing the complexity and the demands of the tasks involved therefore raising the standard of teaching and broadening the curriculum, OR

It can be argued that traditional pencil-and-paper tests can have a narrowing effect on curriculum (content and teaching methods) and result in

- Knowing without understanding
- Inability to generalise from specifics to similar problems in different contexts
- Repeated failure, drop-out, truancy

The argument for curriculum reform focuses on how 'assessment must take account of higher-order skills and competencies such as problem solving, investigation and analysis, and thus must involve far more 'authentic' or realistic tasks than have traditionally been employed in the field." (Torrance, 1995, 3). It is suggested that "improved authentic assessments will lead to improved teaching and learning in schools as teachers adopt their classroom and laboratory practices to ensure that their students succeed at the new tasks."

There is also a long history of the relationship between assessment and learning. Diagnostic and formative assessment have traditionally been employed to promote learning however, much of the debate in this area Torrance suggests has remained 'research -oriented' and in the realm of 'policy making'. The political context further complicates the debate as Torrance focuses on "the use to which assessment results can be put in league tables of school performance." There are numerous examples in NSW of governments publishing individual school HSC results in a similar league table fashion. The political climate of competition amongst schools for clients, the Federal funding debate between public and private education in NSW and other competitive structures and systems continue to proliferate.

The purpose of assessment therefore becomes a very interesting question. It can be argued that new approaches such as 'authentic assessment' seemingly open up possibilities for students in the implementation of more challenging curriculum content and delivery (more practical work, oral communication, local fieldwork, and more realistic problem-solving), however, it can also be argued that such new approaches herald a raft of new educational accountabilities, albeit disguised in the rhetoric of assessment opening up new teaching and learning possibilities. The purpose of 'authentic assessment' can therefore be subverted by practical difficulties in implementation and the degree of 'fit' that teachers perceive between the purpose of assessment for their students and for example the purpose of assessment for a final year traditional examination.

Many art and design teachers would argue that they have been carrying out "authentic assessments" for many years, as visual arts has a strong performative base. My research is about uncovering some of the meanings, procedures and hidden roles that assessment holds for art teachers. I believe that my research examines and critiques 'authenticity' and as the title suggests remains in search of 'authenticity' in the visual arts classroom. My hunch is that the examples chosen to share in this paper, show that assessment has many purposes which seemingly have little to do with providing a challenging new curriculum and teaching methodology. The purpose of assessment from my research seems to have more to do with the context of increased competition and teacher/school accountability and seems to be the public face of a more carefully created performance, a fabrication based on much more personal needs to conform, to be seen to know what you are doing, to have authority and be in control. The guilt exposed in much of the dialogue in my examples reveals a deeper role for assessment. Confusion and complexity surrounding assessment definitions and practices seem to be only part of the problem. The other part seem to be about where assessment practice actually comes from (the sources of knowledge about assessment), and the steadfast adherence to certain mysterious formulae, derived from a so called common experience. Beliefs and practices are repeated and their representation is NOT internal or mental, rather the meanings seem to reside in the public sphere, a constructed reality. Assessment is therefore more about what you're expected to say and do and how you are expected to act. Some of the motives of the people in the study reveal that for example, the fear of not doing the right thing and gaining approval may become what assessment is about. Alternatively, adhering to time-honoured practices because they are that. For example there seems to be an invented range of devices and practices to be observed which satisfy a range of stakeholders other than the student. Uncovering the degree of autonomy that teachers have and whether or not they and their motives are driven by cultural, psychological imperatives or is there a set of motives which assessment policy attempts to control for become useful questions for the research.

The Spectacle of Assessment

In order to interrogate the 'implicit', rather than the "explicit" practices of assessment and the routines, interactions, actions and events in which students and teachers engage, in their localised everyday work, the theories of Guy Debord (1983), provide a framework of investigation for the research. Debord Guy (1983) in *Society of the Spectacle*, describes the phenomenological character of the public, societal spectacle. Debord suggests that "In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation." (Debord, 1983, 1). What is real and what is represented as real, ("the spectacle is real") , become key questions here. The motives and reasons for maintaining a reified version of social relations and commodities become useful areas for investigation. What purposes and whom does spectacle or assessment serve?

Spectacle then is autonomous, non-living, simultaneous and importantly is an agent, an "*instrument of unification*", (Debord, 1983, 3), albeit a false and deceptive unity. Spectacle provides fertile territory for separateness, just as one lived and seemingly whole, neat and connected reality may be simultaneously representational, generalized, objectified, reified and deceived. Social relations amongst people form the arena for spectacle, which is not additional to the real world, rather "It is the unrealism of the real society." (Debord, 1983, 6), as spectacle provides a "total justification of the existing system's conditions and goals." So spectacle maintains existing social relations and circumstances, simultaneously alienating and accepting existing society. The horror of revealing the truth of the spectacle involves the affirmation of social life as mere appearance and exposes the visible negation of life, the negative and unrealised forms of social production. Revelations about the spectacular divulge the practices of social-economic formations and their use of time in the context of a

particular historical moment, which invariably are presented as "enormously positive, indisputable, and inaccessible". (Debord, 1983, 12). A monopoly of self affirming reality, which appears and does not seek a reply.

The conceptual power of Debord's theory of the spectacle has been succinctly articulated into a series of 'symptoms of the spectacle' by Brown (1999). Brown's articulation of the theory of the spectacle offers the possibility of some unique insights into the fate of teachers who face the dilemmas of evaluative practice on a daily basis. The systematised regulatory, corporate practices of assessment as evidenced and practiced by institutions and bureaucracies such as federal and state governments is an appropriate context and subject for the utilisation of Brown's research methodology. When placed against the interactions of art teachers which may be "situated" and appropriated under 'economic' systems of production, where students and teachers could be considered as 'raw material' Brown, (1999, 12), comparisons and understandings become possible between the public and private or explicit and implicit practices of assessment. The nature, purpose and kind of assessment practice as an event, with rules and procedures (or models of identification) to be followed may allow some assessment practices of teachers to be mapped. Understanding the theoretical relationship between how evaluative practices are presented as spectacle in the public domain as 'organised appearance' (Debord, 1983, 219) and as 'a model for identification' (Debord, 1983, 61), and simultaneously how evaluative practice as public spectacle is the opposite of the individual where "the agent renounces all autonomous qualities in order to identify himself with the general laws of obedience to the course of things". (Debord, 1983, 61), will be the focus of future research. "The agent of the spectacle placed on stage as a star is the opposite of the individual, the enemy of the individual in himself as well as others". (Debord, 1983, 61).

Part of the research was therefore aimed at finding out about what teachers thought evaluative practice actually was in the context of exploring some possible meanings of assessment for visual arts teachers. This presentation is not about how to do assessment rather the focus is on understanding the procedures and hidden roles that assessment plays for teachers in a selected Australian example.

The basis for collecting data: research in secondary schools

To provide some understanding from the situation of those who experience it and interrogate the question "What do teachers think about assessment?" a qualitative study into evaluative practices in Visual Arts using a naturalistic approach as outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1981 & 1985) and Rubin (1982) was chosen as an appropriate methodology. This research is grounded by a naturalistic investigation of conflicting evaluative paradigms surrounding art education. The appropriateness of the naturalistic research design to a project interested in uncovering emergent themes and meanings is important here, as the title of the paper implies a search a quest and a journey around and about the terms authentic and assessment.

The research in progress presented here today provides a snapshot with examples of some interviews collected from three secondary art teachers in NSW schools. My presentation focuses then on some initial hunches from my field research and it is anticipated that further fieldwork and analysis will be the focus of future research work. Presenting enables me to test ideas against an audience and I am interested in hearing comments and getting feedback work here today. The paper is about searching for authenticity in assessment and is not about how to do 'authentic assessment' rather the focus for me is on understanding the procedures and hidden roles that assessment plays in a selected Australian example.

The research project examples, discussion and local accounts of practice are organised under the following headings which were emergent categories and examples of teachers defining practice from my research.

- Assessment as authority
- Assessment as a rite of passage
- Assessment as a form of exclusion
- Assessment as credentialling
- Assessment as formulae
- Assessment as self-serving activity

However, for the purposes of this brief presentation I have chosen three emergent categories to provide a snapshot of my search for authenticity. The emergent categories chosen are, Assessment as Authority, Assessment as a Rite of Passage and Assessment as Formulae. Finally the conclusion of the paper will address the emergent category of Assessment as a self-serving activity.

Assessment as authority

The Art Educator as Evaluator: Implicit knowledge is more than the sum of the parts.

Using transcripts from my research the following ideas have emerged to exemplify what I mean by the authority of assessment:

- The complexity surrounding the concept of definition, where respondents were asked about what evaluative practice actually was.
- Kinds of evaluation

In the fieldwork component of the research teachers were asked what "evaluative practice" actually was. The transcripts show a myriad of kinds of assessment which I have selected from the data. Looking at two respondents from my research reveals 72 different kinds of evaluation described by teachers undertaking assessment in their classrooms. The range of kinds of assessment entails naming kinds and types of measures, spans year groups and credentialling issues, has the usual roll call of assessment types such as profile reporting and student evaluation, however, there are some interesting additional inclusions such as prizes, Presentation Day, informal technique, private assessment in an art room and public assessment of the whole thing. Assessment then, possesses a localised authority that teachers give in a firm, fairly gritty and resolved kind of way. Inventions are fixed, and re-definitions occur. Much of what occurs is not written down, but my selection of terms from the transcripts describing "kinds of evaluation" speak about how it happens contingently in a localised setting. Who is the authority and where are all of these definitions coming from? Within the local culture assessment is "situated" and constructed and such a range of definitions can be ascribed to a "culture of assessment" of which on face value would appear unrelated. Teachers may not know what they are, but they act them out as they have a particular meaning for the local context of the school. Boughton (1994) definition of evaluation is that "*Evaluation* is a complex undertaking resulting in value judgements being made about ideas, products and activities." (Boughton 1994, 2). Boughton suggests that these judgements are made by various people and are about the worth of all aspects of the educational enterprise. He goes on to say teachers make judgements about:

- the value of curricula;
- the qualities inherent in student art products,
- the significance of learning experiences,

- their own effectiveness

Further in the paragraph Boughton asserts that evaluation may serve different interests, for example, school administrators are concerned about evaluating the quality and appropriateness of the total school curriculum for the particular community and the competency of the teaching staff. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties and providing a request for "careful analysis of the values held by all of the interested parties" (Boughton, 1994, 2), remains in the business of definition and offers a fairly traditional view of what is supposed to be going on. However, from the perspective of my research data, assessment is not what you thought it might be, there is something additional going on.

Assessment as a rite of passage

The Art Educator and the Exam.

- The good old oxymoron in art

This section of from the Red transcript is about 'real art' versus the exam. Prac marking refers to the annual external marking of Visual Arts HSC Submitted Works in New South Wales, or the artmaking component of the Visual Arts mark. The Submitted Work was previously called the Major Work, yet the terminology of 'major' continues to be used. Using the Red example, real art it seems is not made in school so assessment in the form of the HSC Submitted Practical work is an example of assessment as a rite of passage for students to go through. In the excerpt provided there is a kind of 'invented guilt' about having to invent how it looks to another authority. Questions about "am I doing it right" to satisfy parents, students' futures and outcomes become cumulative when placed in the context of other limitations. For example, because of the need to do well teachers often restrict or have an active game plan to address times when students want to try new media for a Submitted Work. The range and scope of artmedia that is taught and selected for study is a useful example of how teachers confront contradictions locally between the discipline, the felt need for experimentation in Visual Arts, examination requirements and student success. If you maximise the students' chances to do well in an examination, you increase the subjects chances to do well. The profile of the subject in the school is raised and the viability of the Visual Arts area is enhanced. There is also guilt about 'risk-taking' in making student art work. You want the student to take a risk and explore, experiment and be expressive but within certain limits. Anxiety, seduction and ways to be convinced to do additional work are all part of such a guilt ridden state, which is unhelpful for art teachers. The Red transcript contains the quote "You have to be very calculating about what you're good at and what you're doing for your major work." which reveals a little of how teachers compromise what they do. By showing the lack of fit between what teachers do, the ideal and the external constraints of an examination some the pressures of accountability and 'ways to conform' which are not evident in assessment documents can be set down.

Assessment as formulae

The Art Educator and community.

Three different respondents and settings have been selected to address notions of the staged and the formulaic. In search of the formula, where do teachers look? And what do they look for when performing an assessment episode. Criteria, and needing to have a formula and sources seems evident however, the authority and emphasis change throughout the three examples provided. A brief analysis of transcripts has been undertaken using Spradley's (1980) descriptors to provide examples of the some of the ways formulas and patterns appear in assessment practice. A structured formula provides security and for

the sake of appearances may appeal to teachers as a good way of closing the gap between real life, student progress, ideal assessment practices, the field or discipline of the visual arts and examination practices. Examples included here comprise:

Example 1: Stages in prac marking (Red Transcript) This segment refers to a public exam, with a team of art teachers, already constituted making judgements about an art product.

Example 2: Stages in doing an assessment of the still life (Green Transcript) This segment refers to student artwork, with one teacher and students evaluating an artwork. The team is the student and the teacher.

Example 3: Stages in a really formal evaluation (Orange Transcript) This segment refers to a teacher marking a range of students artwork.

There is a need for a theory and a structure in doing or performing an assessment, however, assessment is often misrecognised as something coming from somewhere else. It's a necessary structure because you need it. Whilst being formulaic in kind these various understandings of the steps and stages in an evaluation are being done with some other quite key ideas in mind. The respondents all think they are sorting and ranking in the same way, but it is a constructed world. Previous mark settings and experiences, group dynamics such as working out and almost jockeying for positions, and different conceptions of labour or activity are articulated in the transcripts. The stages and steps like the complexity of definition outlined earlier reveal subtle positions of authority and different stakeholders in how the work is actually assessed. Time honoured traditions produce a comfort factor and sigh of relief when it has worked. Efficiency, predictability and maintenance of expertise are implicated in carrying the authority of assessment. Teachers need to demonstrate and have a conception of evaluation able to be revealed in a public story that people sincerely believe. However, through looking at practice there are different ways of understanding the task at hand. In the Green transcript the following lines "I give a mark for effort, a mark for presentation and the final work mark." give an indication that being fair is delicately counter positioned against the end product. Assessment here is not necessarily about the work. Psychological motives are implicated in 'being seen' to be fair as it may be what you believe is important in the teacher/student relationship. The structure of fairness then becomes a necessary structure because you need it.

Assessment of student artworks in the Green transcript seems to be about marks, effort and presentation. In other words, assessment is about effort, labour, commitment and time spent on the task. Deadlines and having to have a public report or benchmark places emphasis on certain prescribed ways of completing assessment work. The arbitrary way that the marks will be allocated for the task, indicates the reason and purpose of assessment to be closely aligned with the notion of doing the activity for the sake of the marks. In addition the perception of the worth of the student residing in how much effort they make is about identifying with "general laws of obedience" and an example of Debord's "organised appearance". There is no mention of the conceptual or necessarily skill based components of a visual arts example. Perhaps this is the difference between busy work that is the doing the work for the simple sake of doing the work, versus the "what" or the content of what you are doing. Each moment or step/stage is emphasized but hidden in an individual moment of an assessor. The assessor cannot stand aside from the performance as it is already constructed for you.

Concluding remarks

- Assessment as self-serving activity
- The emergence of an "assessment industry"?

My hunches about assessment and trends emerging from the research are provisional and speculative. In making a claim to the territory it is important to emphasise that the data has not been fully analysed and the explanatory framework has not been fully applied. Part of the problem for me seems to be that within the provision of explicit guidelines and transparency there is opacity, competition and fabrication in the localised culture of assessment which is "situated" and enacted in visual arts classrooms. From my research some sources of ways of doing things or put more cynically some of the sources of power and control in teachers assessment lives seem to be:

- HSC Prac marking, or examination marking experiences;
- Other schools, other teachers and other art teachers
- An individuals previous experiences, perceived expertise, history and values;
- Individual localised school requirements and contexts, prize nights, HSC school-based requirements;
- The Principal and other players with management of decision-making power;
- The artworld, (real art) exhibitions and exhibition culture, the field of visual arts and design;

Exploring the gaps between practice, an ideal view of assessment as a systematised technical policy, the field and discipline of the visual arts and system examination requirements becomes an interesting nexus and set of relationships to explore. Acknowledging the existence of and motives for a range of extended behaviours, dispositions and habits continues to be of interest as the theoretical analysis of data proceeds. An interest in interrogating and narrowing the gaps between a diverse and complex range of interests and values in assessment practice, in other words becoming authentic rather than guilt ridden was the impetus for my initial research. However, authenticity becomes a fragile term as evidenced in my transcript data, which describes some of the circuitous relationships between teachers, students and artworks when conducting assessment in the classroom. Brown (1996) in a paper titled *Problems of Authenticity in the Assessment of Student Art*, describes the fluid nature of the assessment exchange and gives reasons why a "... systematic representation of the relation between artwork and pupil and the properties of value which transpose between them." present a dilemma for art teachers. In Visual Arts tasks and practices may already be more realistic, performative and challenging than in many other subjects, however, assessment still has a range of other motives, events, actions and interactions from the perspective of the teacher that impact on the degree of authenticity available on a particular task. In other words in this local view of assessment and the role it plays in teachers lives there are a large range of actions, events and interactions that take place in the lives of students and teachers in the school. These actions, events and interactions can be ascribed to a "culture of assessment" which on face value would appear unrelated and perhaps remains hidden from view. In making judgements about the use of research data I am attempting to "seize" relevant material for research and I am interested in what can play a role and what can't. How you understand practice as relevant is important here as I am attempting to uncover a local culture, one that many understandings of assessment may have not considered. In the search for authenticity then 'authentic assessment' may be subverted, tested and by the degree of 'fit' that teachers perceive between the purpose of assessment for their students and the purpose of assessment for a final year examination or other examples of traditional assessment systems. In addition, the degree of autonomy available for a teacher in the context of sorting, ranking and comparison of students' artworks in the local context of the classroom may be very slight. However, curriculum and pedagogy far from being "teacher proof" are revealed as complex understandings about practice with other kinds of game-plays at work. My description of assessment as a self-serving activity derives from this sense of a laid down, established and endorsed set of actions and events that take place in the lives of students and teachers in the school. It would appear that 90% of what you do is

already pre-determined within a prescribed set of 'right' actions and demeanours. For the purposes of this paper pre-determined means assessment as determined by syllabus, curriculum, policy and definitions, but there are other established game-plays at work which may also be pre-determined. For example, previous mark settings, your experience and expertise, your conception of the field or discipline, the kids, your conception of labour, commitment and time, public deadlines and having to have a mark. The pressure of accountability evidenced by a series of 'ways to conform' may compromise what you do. Such additional practices are typically not evident in assessment documents.

The emergence of an "assessment industry"?

I speculate then that the purposes of assessment are not confined to assessing students, and propose that the implicit rather than the explicit practices of assessment form the basis of an "assessment industry". In this particular view of the term industry, practices are described, not behaviours, so the routines, habits and procedures of everyday life become problematised and interesting. The reason why this is interesting is that teachers don't necessarily know what role assessment plays in their lives and the effect assessment may have on their feelings about "being in control" which is exercised over their working lives, yet they continue to act them out. Why did I keep doing assessment in certain prescribed ways...? Assessment is part of a publicly constructed reality, a complex, orchestrated fabrication based on needs to conform and be seen to know what you are doing in order to maintain an "organised appearance" and provide "models of identification" to maintain existing social relations. For me much of the material emerging from my research resonates well with the concerns that I had as a visual arts teacher and presents some of the complexity surrounding assessment. We should respect complexity because it's a game that needs to be learned to give teachers the opportunity to be subtle players in the orchestrated and complex world of institutional life. Consumption, fabrication, competition and economic accountability take on new meanings when they are considered from the point of view of the teacher undertaking assessment in their art classrooms.

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