

# Teachers' Classroom Assessment Decision Making: A Professional Judgment

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## ABSTRACT

Although teachers' assessment practices aim at ensuring internal cohesion in curriculum transposition, they include an irreducible margin of unpredictability that escapes planning. Assessment indeed focuses more on what is really taught, whereas a curriculum influences practices in an indirect way. In this research, we wanted to deepen the knowledge of teachers' summative assessment practices following a change of curriculum. In order to study the "judgment-in-act" of several professionals, individual interviews were conducted with primary school teachers. During these interviews, each teacher marked students' productions while verbalizing interpretations and reasoning which emerged during assessment. A first study focused on the construction of assessment tools. We wanted to identify the epistemological orientation conveyed by tasks, the place of different capacities and the types of chosen tasks. In a second study we looked at the marking of students' productions by the same teachers. Our analysis show the progressive and dynamic construction of teachers' judgments, which involve a "triangulation" of information from several data sources. The production of an appreciation can thus be considered as a multitude of successive and temporary judgments which adjust progressively. Using verbatim excerpts, we will report on the different approaches used by teachers in the criterion-referenced judgment process leading to decision making. We will present in a detailed way how several referents are successively mobilized, formal but also implicit and specific to the assessment situation. In conclusion, we will question issues related to the construction and judgment of complex tasks, which represent new challenges for classroom assessment practices.

**Keywords:** teacher judgment; summative assessment; alignment; grading; complex tasks