

## Interview with Professor Christopher DeLuca

### Speakers

**Professor Christopher DeLuca**

**Dr Jennifer Farrar**

**Dr Farrar 0:01**

Hello. Thank you so much, Chris, for joining us today for our discussion that has been grandly titled international evidence. And which, of course, it really means it's an opportunity for me to speak to you as an international expert - as an international education expert from Canada - and to use this conversation as a way to shine a light into some of the policies and practice in your part of the world so that we can then make some connections to the current reforms that are underway in Wales. So thank you so much for coming along. And you're a professor of educational assessment, and an associate dean at Queen's University in Canada. That's correct. I wonder if I can maybe ask you now just to tell us a little bit more about your role and your research specialism in general.

**Professor DeLuca 0:56**

Great. Well, thanks, Jen. It is such a pleasure to be with you today. As you mentioned, my name is Christopher Luca, and I'm currently a professor of classroom assessment at the Faculty of Education here at Queen's University, and also the director of the Queen's assessment and evaluation groups, so we really focus in on how we productively use assessment in classrooms to support student learning. And then also part of that is how do we support teachers in leveraging assessment in their classrooms? So we are kind of preoccupied with the notion of how do teachers learn to assess and to use assessment productively in their classrooms. So we think about assessment in a whole bunch of ways, thinking about it in terms of diagnostically, formatively, and, of course, summatively, and so that's how our research has taken shape over a number of years, a number of decades, in fact, here at Queen's. And so that's sort of what has also shaped our work with governments and different educational systems around the world. So we've worked with local school districts, but we've also worked in different regions, in China, in the United States and across Europe as well.

**Dr Farrar 2:02**

Great, thank you. So we will draw from some of this richness I'm sure as we go through our conversations today, thank you. I wonder if you could begin by just telling us a little bit

about the context of where you are in Canada? How would you describe the curriculum? What are its key features and principles, just in general terms, please?

**Professor DeLuca 2:21**

Perfect. Well, you know, Canada is a big place. And so we've got 13 provinces and territories, and I'm located in Ontario, it's the largest province in terms of population. In Ontario, we have what we call a standards-based curriculum. So the curriculum is organized in terms of overall expectations, curricula expectations, which are further broken down in terms of specific expectations, by grade level and by subject area. So we've got curriculum for the arts and curriculum for sciences and English and, and all the subjects areas by grade level. And then there are a few topic areas that are transdisciplinary, or that cut across the subjects. Things like financial literacy, which teachers are expected to integrate within and across the subject areas. But overall, we have a fairly segmented curriculum around subjects and grade levels. So it's not a progression based curriculum like you have in Wales. Assessment is the main responsibility of teachers. So teachers are primarily monitoring student learning around these objectives and expectations. And they are the primary individual who reports on student learning in terms of reporting cycles of formal report cards.

We do have a large-scale assessment program in the province. It's called EQAO, education quality Accountability Office, and they run assessments in grades 3,6,9, and literacy testing grade 10. Overall, that large scale assessment system is for public accountability and not intended for high stakes or really as a gatekeeping mechanism for students. It really is to signal to the public - how are our students doing at a cohort level with the curriculum expectations and grades 3, 6, 9 and the grade 10. One is an indicator of students and their progression in the area of literacy.

So that's how our curriculum and our assessments are organized in the province of Ontario. When we zoom out and look across Canada, there is a fairly, I would say, strong consistency in the way different provinces organize their curriculum similar to Ontario. We do have BC who has recently reformed their curriculum around more of a progression-based model, like what we see in Wales, so that's a recent reform that's happened, but the majority of provinces have still a fairly more traditional organization around on 10th grade level-based curriculum.

**Dr Farrar 4:54**

Okay, thank you. I wonder, could you remind us grade 10 - what's the age of two? Have students in that age?

**Professor DeLuca 5:02**

Oh, I'll have to think about that, I think grade 10 is around 15/16.

**Dr Farrar 5:08**

Okay, so it's going into the senior phase.

**Professor DeLuca 5:11**

It's a senior base, yes. Okay so we say grade nine is our senior division or our high school age. And primary Jr. is grades – grade one to grade three, and then we segment grades for the four to eights usually.

**Dr Farrar 5:26**

Yeah. It always to get your ear in to kind of the different ages. Thank you so much. Have there been, perhaps, I don't know whether you want to talk about Ontario or whether you want to zoom in and think about a particular other part, whether, you mentioned BC there? Have there been recent reforms that have taken place? And in broad terms, what changes have been made? And then perhaps we can go on to then how have they been received? Maybe we could talk first of all about the changes that have been made.

**Professor DeLuca 5:53**

Yeah, so in Ontario, I'll just stay focused on this province. In the area of assessment, the most recent substantive policy change that has happened was in 2010. So it's been a while we're probably due for one. And that was with the introduction of our central policy document and assessment called "Growing Success". And that policy really introduced a new language for assessment in the province. Traditionally, we had the notions of formative and summative assessment, diagnostic formative summative assessment. And this policy introduced assessment for learning of learning and as learning as a framework for thinking about assessment, and really anchored assessment, sort of it repeatedly says that the primary purpose of assessment is to support student learning. So the reframing of assessment in the service of student learning as opposed to assessment for accountability purposes, gatekeeping purposes, reporting purposes, which are maybe historically and traditionally the functions of assessment. So the emphasis now is really on supporting student learning, which optimizes assessment for learning within the classroom, and that's the intent of the policy. It's not to negate the role of summative assessment or assessment of learning. The idea is that there's a link there, that those are not separate activities, that when we do assessment for learning well, and we do formative assessment in our

classroom, that that helps, of course, the student in their summative assessment tasks, right, these are not disparate activities, they are connected activities.

And other piece around that policy document, which was sort of an emphasis or re-emphasis on the learning skills. So these are things like cooperation, independent learning, self-regulation. The pieces that we know, help structure, good learning, and the achievement of the expectations was also now a part of the reporting in a more explicit way, so it is historically was always there, but now it's sort of the front page of the report card, we're emphasizing the learning skills, and that's aligning with the discourse on assessment as learning. And so we've tried to really bring forward that learning skills focus and the formative assessment. So this policy, I think, fairly clearly articulated the framework of our assessment.

But of course, with any new framework of assessment - that's for teachers, and principals, administrators, and others in the system - it is learning a new language, and it is trying to map that new language onto their existing practices, and really decipher what is it about? What is it that I'm doing that either maps on to the new policy, or what is it that I need to change? And so it's that negotiation, that negotiation takes some time to wrestle with, and also needs time and community to figure out right? So as a school community, as a divisional community as a system, we need to understand how this this new policy resonate with the kinds of initiatives that are already underway in our in our school, school or school district. So for some, I think it was a fairly intuitive policy, if they looked at it and said, this is what I'm doing, this actually gives me a language and a framework to explain what I'm doing, validates what I'm doing. And for others, maybe who more historically emphasize the summative assessment and maybe didn't have a strong practice of the formative assessment. It felt like an addition to their to their program, it felt like now I need to do new things around assessment. And overall, you know, when we introduce any new language and any new policy, it always does feel initially like, here's some new tasks I need to do as a teacher - new responsibilities. What is this assessment for learning? Now I need to do XY and Z in my classroom, in addition to everything I'm doing, as opposed to that critical analysis of saying, how does how does what, what is being suggested map onto what I'm currently doing? What needs to be taken out what needs to be added in? So I think there was certainly a period of that negotiation.

**Dr Farrar 9:52**

Now imagine with something like that, you mentioned this this language, there's discourse, and you would have maybe competing definitions for terms or, or terms that were maybe loosely understood? How will how were those things resolved?

**Professor DeLuca 10:05**

So that's not unique to the Ontario context, we've seen the terms of assessment for learning and assessment as learning in particular being taken up in various educational systems in a

whole bunch of different ways, so the definitions are not always consistently understood. And that, you know, in part, that's okay. Right? These are terms that have been introduced - they were originated out of research studies and out of work with teachers in a context of practice. And that doesn't mean those definitions are static and stable and need to apply equally in every space. I think what's important is that the spirit of those terms gets interpreted in the context that they're being used, and so for the spirit of assessment for learning, I think it really revolves around inviting students to be vocal players in the assessment process, cultivating a feedback rich learning environment, and using assessment to focus and drive learning forward. And sort of releasing the pressure of the summative assessment in that in that experience. And so if we can sort of cultivate that spirit in a in a suite of pedagogies and practices, then I think we are endorsing assessment for learning.

But as you say, it gets taken up in very different ways across systems, and initially, and often at times, it gets taken up as us, you know, a set of five practices or a set of 10 practices, you can, you know, Google assessment for learning, and you'll come up with any list of procedural practices around assessment for learning, and that's maybe a good starting place. But really, when we start to see it in action, it moves from that procedural adoption to a sort of an entrenched model of how I teach assessment for learning is essentially a pedagogical approach. And it changes how I teach to a feedback rich orientation where feedback is coming from the teacher, from the other students, and from the student themselves, to drive learning forward.

**Dr Farrar 12:07**

It's certainly not something that's an overnight change - it's something that, as you're describing there, it's a process of evolution and of deepening of learning for the teacher themselves. And we'll come back to this concept of the spirit, I think it'd be gone a wee bit into the into our conversation, but I wonder, we've talked a bit about some of the challenges of meta language and definitions from, from the experiences of Canadian colleagues, have there been any other challenges or knots that have emerged in response to curriculum implementation and assessment change? And then if you have any thoughts on the solutions and workarounds that were that were devised in your context?

**Professor DeLuca 12:46**

Yeah. So I think, you know, one of the biggest challenge when we're moving towards feedback rich assessment orientation, is the challenge and the, you know, the perceived tension that's embedded in most systems of formative versus summative, or formative versus accountability. And that's a bit of a knotty problem, because, you know, the accountability mandate in education is so strong, and, and in some cases, is intensifying, and yet at the same time, we're trying to promote a discourse and a practice that runs counter to that in the in the sense of, we want to be able to create a feedback rich environment that is focused on learning and not the products of learning or only high achievement, that

learning for learning's sake. And so there's always this embedded tension. And that embedded tension is both explicit in the system in terms of policies, reporting practices, and assessments, but also in cultural values, the ways in which we historically have valued these ways of thinking about assessment, and how different, different cultures that are in our system also value those ways of thinking about assessment.

So we're, you know, teachers are right in the middle of negotiating all of that, and sometimes are confronted with, you know, having to value some of the summative, even though they might not, you know, intuitively want to, because that's what's expected of them either culturally within their, their system, or because of some of those large scale assessment structures that are at play. So that's been embedded tension. And that embedded tension also then sometimes works to the value and assessment for learning agenda overall. So when you roll out a policy, like our growing success policy, in some contexts that really had a high accountability and, you know, environment. They might less emphasize the assessment for learning pieces and more emphasize the summative pieces, and so it gets taken up differentially based on that, that tension. So that's, that's one tension that we see.

Another tension that we're seeing and that I think is intensifying is, and it particularly operates at the elementary level and sort of grades one through one through six, one through eight is that our reporting system is still segmented based on curriculum discipline, so math, science, the arts, and yet we are increasingly wanting to see teachers and students engage in rich learning paths that are enquiry driven, that integrate the subjects together in terms of a focal area of interest for the student. So, you know, explore this aspect of climate change, or, you know, explore this socio-cultural issue, which, you know, by its nature integrates subject areas and curricular areas, and so is an embedded enrich task, and so the assessment of that doesn't necessarily tease out all the curricular error elements, but the reporting does, and so there's that tension of the integrated curriculum, but the highly individualistic or separate form of reporting that we have in our province anyways. So that's something I think we need to continue to work out, that sort of the divide between our curriculum orientation, our pedagogical orientation and our reporting structure, and tried to find ways of navigating and aligning those a little bit better.

**Dr Farrar 16:16**

Gosh, lots of lots of moving parts.

**Professor DeLuca 16:19**

So those are a few. I think, the second part of your question was workarounds or ways forward. Yeah. And I think, you know, though, those knotty problems are not easy to untangle. Those are entrenched ones within the system. And so, you know, it's not like there's a quick fix to any of that. But what we've seen with the teachers we've worked with, is that it really is about teachers, finding allies and building a community around them that

has a sort of a shared understanding and shared a shared understanding and shared vision for what assessment needs to look like in their school. And that means teachers working together in professional learning communities, and directly addressing these knotty problems and how they get interpreted and how they get shared with parents and other stakeholders within their community. So that there's a common understanding, and what it might look like in this school district, or this community might be some, you know, somewhat different than another school district. But the teachers have come together and thought about that, and worked through that, and have come up with an interpretation both in terms of how they're how they're speaking of it, but, but how they're also practicing it in their classroom.

**Dr Farrar 17:30**

So from what you're seeing there, I'm getting a strong mental image of, you know, ever increasing circles, in terms of like, there's teachers working together in their local communities and within one school, but within a cluster or a district, and then having differing interpretations and different applications of things according to context. And what you're saying is that it's okay that we're expecting local and regional variation of something that comes from the top down.

**Professor DeLuca 17:57**

So how we've described it in some of the research we've done is sort of a loose tight structure. You know, you've got some tight elements, which are the policies that help, you know, give signposts of where we're at and give us a language and a discourse, but we've got some loose elements which are in this district, we take those signposts, we take that language, and we interpret it in this way, that resonate with our community of students with our parental community, with the way in which we want to see the spirit of AFL and summative assessments take shape, in terms of the curriculum that we are implementing. And so there's, there's both the need for some consistency, of course, across our province, we have a desire for that we, we don't have a lot of privatization, we have a degree of standardization in terms of curriculum and adherence to that. But we also want to have some local agency and autonomy to bring that to life. And so it's a bit of a loose tight structure in that way. But in order for that to work, that teachers need to have some community of shared understanding. So that's where some leadership comes into play around how we bring teachers together purposely to have conversations, to observe each other's practice, to give each other feedback, you know, to really engage in some deep, collaborative professional learning structures around these very issues that are at the heart of the tensions that they're trying to face.

**Dr Farrar 19:17**

I really like the idea of a loose tight structure in the sense that it does give you permission, I think, to feel that that variation is okay, and that you don't have to worry about getting it right, when you're not quite sure what getting it right means because I think, for me as a teacher that in any sort of sense of change, it's thinking, am I doing this right, am I getting it wrong? But I think what you're saying here is that you're, you're using the tight aspects of the policy and developing a looseness around that that is responsive to your own context. I'm also thinking of my terrible knitting when I'm thinking of that as well. So we'll move we'll move on, we'll move on from that. Thank you for that really, really helpful response there. Maybe building on that last question then with this idea of the fact that teachers do have agency but they are working within these systems and structures that sometimes can create tensions - how do you suggest that we can support teachers in adapting to such change and assessment cultures? Now, you've already mentioned communities of practice, which is really helpful, but are there, you know, how do we empower teachers to do the work to be kind of curriculum makers and assessment makers, which I think are phrases that you use in your work?

**Professor DeLuca 20:26**

So I mean, I think we've all learned the process, those that, you know, just rolling out a policy and hoping that it works and gets adopted, on its own, is a little utopic in our thinking, and instead, what we've seen is when we were rolling out growing success, and in the school districts we were working with, in particular, we needed a more systematic and systemic approach to doing that work, that was also multimodal in supporting teachers. So it wasn't that idea of, we could just offer one workshop or one kind of workshop and hoping that that had traction, or we can offer one kind of support or an assessment coach within a district, and that was enough, right? It actually had to have a variety of touch points with the new policy or with the new curriculum, in order to support teachers effectively. I mean, we're talking about hundreds of teachers trying to understand, you know, a fairly new and complex policy that was intersecting with an historical way of doing things, so, I mean, this is a complex transition, right?

So a couple of the strategies that we saw effective in the school districts we worked with, one was the leaders, so principals, vice principals, also being learners, alongside teachers. So we recognize that just because you're in a position of authority in a school doesn't mean you understand it all or, you know, just because you've read the policy, or even sat at the policy development table, doesn't mean you've got it down pat, that there's still ways of interpreting it in context and practice, and so being at the table with the teachers as they're learning it, and showing that as a, as a leader you are learning too is humbling, and also is a very open space for learning, creates an open space for learning and for teachers to be open about their learning as well. As I mentioned, learning communities, so recognizing that it's not just a teacher's job on their own to learn this, but actually, it's all of our work, and so let's do it together, just like we would with our students, I mean, thinking about students, as



learners, we put them together, we create learning communities, for students, same thing with our teachers.

Recognizing that learning is not a linear path, so sometimes they think we can read the policy and implement it, and, you know, and it keeps getting better and better and better in terms of implementation. Well, the reality is what we see in research all the time and what we know about practice is, you know, we try something out, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, sometimes you go two steps forward, one step back. And so in fact, learning and implementation and adoption of policy is a nonlinear process. And that nonlinear process, when supported by a community, over time, becomes a more positive implementation. So we go forward, but as a community, we respond to that, and we learn from those setbacks and then move forward. So this is not this is not rocket science, but it is sort of, in part, dispelling some myths about sometimes rolling things out, and, and what we kind of intuitively might think is, should be a linear, linear process.

And then, in the space that we were working in, which I think, worked well for supporting the teachers around particularly assessment for learning implementation, we use an instructional rounds approach, and that had a variety of elements to it - it allows teachers to go into first and allow teachers to set learning goals for themselves, so to take the big policy and the big, you know, variety of things that they needed to implement and zero in on some certain aspects that they wanted to really focus on. So dissecting the whole and picking some chunks of of implementation, and then trying that out in a in a really intentional way in their classroom, but then inviting other teachers into their space to observe them, try that out. And then to provide them with feedback. So in this way, we are actually leveraging assessment for learning strategies to support teachers learning. And so that's also a very deep way of learning about assessment for learning as well, right by doing it, the experiential. And so in this particular case, because we were learning to implement AFL, we were doing sort of in a double way they were using AFL to learn about AFL. And so, creating opportunities for that kind of rich dialogue among peers, observation in practice, feedback, and leveraging AFL were really instrumental here.

We also had group sessions, so workshops, you know, so your traditional professional development workshops - those were seen in is important to consolidate, learning to revisit the core principles, you know, there is a role for coming back to theory, to coming back to let's define the thing it is we are trying to do, so a little bit of that work, but also then time in the classroom that's also considered professional learning. So all these multiple, multi sort of multiple approaches, and not just relying on just a policy or just professional learning sessions, to do the work, so that that can continue the process.

**Dr Farrar 25:30**

That's really useful, I think, because it gives us a strong sense of how all of this work that you might do in a workshop and you might gain from, you know, reading out a policy document that you're embedding it within the learning, and you're sharing that learning, and I love the idea of using instructional rounds in that way as well. That's lovely, thank you so much. Now

what we wanted to ask you now, and I know you mentioned already that Ontario doesn't have a sense of progression within that, within the curriculum there, in the same way that we that Wales has now, but just to draw on your knowledge from this thinking about progression curriculums in general, how can schools use formative assessment to build narratives of progression would you say?

**Professor DeLuca 26:10**

So, I mean, I would say that formative assessment really is the backbone of doing that work of building evidence around progression from one stage to the next that when we think about formative assessment as the daily practice of teachers of collecting evidence of where a student is at and where they need to go, then that is that is getting the evidence you need to tell the story or to narrate the progression.

The powerful thing about assessment for learning is that it's not only the teachers job or responsibility to collect the evidence, in fact, the students are probably the best agents, the best assessment agents in your classroom, to do that work. And so when we empower them with the capacity, with the assessment capacity to collect evidence on their learning, to report on it, to analyse it, to give one another feedback, to give themselves feedback, then they can then they can shoulder some of that work.

One of the things we often hear from teachers as they're doing, you know, assessment for learning work, and initially, is that, you know, they're sort of swamped with too much data, too much assessment, I don't have the time to analyse all these data, and so, you know, one of the pieces around that is, have your students use the data, have your students do it and teach them how to analyse the data, and so when they when you sort of put into place a program of assessment, so thinking about, I like this concept of a program of assessment, sort of thinking about how I might think about my literacy program, or how I think about my math program, think about also my assessment program, what does assessment look like in my classroom, and that's in a consistent way for students? And how do I teach them about assessment in a way I might teach them about math or chemistry or another subject area? How do I teach them about assessment so that they can rely on those structures, and they can use them in a way that tells the story of their own learning. And then I can check that story along the way. And so really making, making that an accessible process of process for students, and that's really what assessment for learning is asking us to do - an assessment as learning when we drill down to that level as well.

And so I think one of the things with progression based curriculums is the narration, and when we actually think about it as story, it makes it a little bit easier as well, you know, humans intuitively, gravitate to story and storytelling, and yet, when we think about assessments, we often don't think in storied ways. But if we think about assessments as evidence for stories or as plotlines for stories, it helps us narrate where has this student started, and where did they get to, and tell that story to parents on report cards in different reporting ways. And technology is helping us do this in increasing, increasing ways, both in terms of cataloguing evidence, commenting on evidence, opening up the space of

assessment to parents and others to comment on the stories that are happening over time. So I think this is sort of a bit of a turning point for, for us in education, to really think about assessments not as the unit test that's, you know, done and graded. And that's the only evidence, but really, it's just this continuous flow, this continuous feed, of what the student is doing in classrooms that's continually commented on by teachers and by parents, and by the students themselves. And then over time, you can zoom out and see that progression. I really

**Dr Farrar 29:40**

I really like yeah, I love that idea of the narrative and the story, and that also really helps I think, to be able to allow to differentiate between learners as well and their own learning journeys rather than as you say just this, the sense of assessment as being something done to you by giving you everyone the same test at the end of the unit. Yeah? And has that sense of Learning or progression as narrative - I mean, how does that play out in practice? Are teachers working well with this?

**Professor DeLuca 30:07**

Yeah, it's an interesting idea, and you know, we have examples of it over time. I'm thinking specifically about something that, you know, pedagogical documentation tradition that we see initially in Reggio Emilio schools, which really are incredible learning stories about what's happening in a classroom at the classroom level, but, you know, you can see individual students' learning as well. But they really do, like if you go to some of those exhibits where, or classrooms where they're doing pedagogical documentation, you really walk into what they have done in that classroom, and can see the story of that learning journey. We've tried to promote pedagogical documentation in Ontario and I think some teachers have been able to understand it and implement it, but I think the scale is very different, right? When we're talking 30 students, multiple subjects in a day, you know, we have to still think about how we take some of the spirit of that and bring it in to this kind of administrative organisational structure of school that we have. Some teachers are able to do that, I think we can get that, I think we can get there certainly with more integrated curriculum structures,, or in certain subject areas maybe more easily than others, but I think there are examples of it working well.

**Dr Farrar 31:32**

Yeah, and I think what you're trying to describe there is the sense of how schools can make that shift towards developing and supporting learning through assessment rather than that products and outcomes focus form of assessment. So you're saying that it's through a shift in stance towards appreciating how you can create that narrative.

**Professor DeLuca 31:57**

Yeah, absolutely, and it's also thinking about, you know, what is the summative assessment, so when we think about process versus product, often times we've, you know, had a tendency to lean on the product, or the, by product also meaning summative assessment. And that summative assessment has been construed in very restrictive ways, where if we think about richer, more authentic summative assessments, that have a bigger process around them, a more integrated process around them, and maybe a more collaborative process around them, then we have more in roads in to actually monitoring that, supporting that, telling the story around that, then thinking about it. If it's just a multiple choice test, then the product is actually quite limiting in terms of telling a learning journey around that, right? We don't have as many opportunities around that. Thinking about the kind of product that comes out of learning can also help us think about the process, you, again, I think it's maybe not an either-or kind of thing, you know?

I know we want to think about process but, you know, the process leads us somewhere, makes an impression, and you know, there's points along that way. So how do we create rich products that lead to rich processes, I think is part of the question.

**Dr Farrar 33:17**

Yes, because it's so hard, as you say, to eliminate some of those, there's always going to be tensions between process and product aren't there, and especially when you have high-stakes, senior phase section at the end of a curriculum. Sorry, where I'm sitting, Chris, the sun has come out in Edinburgh and I look like I'm now sitting in a cave, so I'm sorry, but we will continue,

**Professor DeLuca 33:41**

Your face is nicely lit, it's perfect!

**Dr Farrar 33:44**

It's sunny in Scotland so that's nice at least. So just moving on then, you mentioned earlier this idea of spirit, and we had a little chat at the beginning about the sense that, about this being something that's an evolving understanding, and there is some work that you've done there so I was wondering whether, drawing from this research, or anything else you think is relevant. What do we know about what teachers should expect from a period of intense curricular reform, and perhaps you could talk us through some of this idea about the letter and the spirit that you've used within your work, and thinking about how that might help our colleagues in Wales who are currently kind of going through this period of reform.

**Professor DeLuca 34:25**

Yeah, so let's start with letter and spirit. So the letter and spirit metaphor is letter means a procedural adoption of anything, in our case it was assessment for learning, so means you might have, you know, five principles of assessment for learning, and we may implement them in highly procedural ways, like, an example might be, using learning goals and making them explicit in our classrooms, so as a teacher I go in to my class and I write my goal on the blackboard every day. Fine, so I've done AfL today. I haven't maybe worked with that learning goal; I haven't had students construct the learning goal, but I've put it on the board. It doesn't necessarily have high learning value, doing it in that procedural, or "letter based" way, but I've begun the journey along assessment for learning.

And then when we go towards the spirit of assessment for learning, it's integrating assessment for learning in deeper ways within my pedagogical practice so that it truly has the spirit of assessment for learning in the, learning environment that I'm cultivating for students. So it's inviting students to create the learning goal and having them revisit it throughout the day intuitively in how I teach them, and the students, over time, begin to revisit it on their own, so we see this, we see that these kind of principles shape the way in which teaching and learning happen all the time.

So those are, sort of, the stances around letter and spirit. In research there's been that dichotomy play out in a number of, or by a number of researchers, letter verses spirit of assessment for learning. What we did in one project is we really zeroed in on a group of researchers - 88 teachers across two school districts who were learning to implement assessment for learning and we observed them over a number of years, and what we saw is that teachers, as they were implementing assessment for learning weren't just implementing the letter, or the spirit, but they were implementing a space between the letter and the spirit. So we articulated 5 gradients between implementing the letter, and leading the spirit of assessment for learning. And so what we recognised is that any adoption of curriculum or assessment it always this process of implementing granular changes that lead us in a path towards deeper implementation but that that pathway is not a linear one as we talked about earlier so that we might move from letter towards leading spirit but we might inch forward a little bit, you know, one term, but then move back the next term by maybe entering a new context of teaching the following term, you know, that now makes me rethink my practices and actually makes me go back to some of the, the foundational learning of AfL in order to implement it again. And so we don't always get to leading the spirit in a linear, linear path.

So that's, that's one of the ideas we were, observing and seeing playing out. And, you know, it was shaped by a number of factors as well, so while there was a top down initiative at play there was a new policy in operation. In fact, in order for it to have life in this context, it needed to be inspired by teachers who want to take it up, who wanted to say I'm not just going to do the procedural version of this, right? Which can happen with any policy. I want to see the spirit enacted, so it needed to start from a position of people actually wanting to

enter that continuum of learning. So we had people who were sort of geared up for that, motivated for that, that was one of the conditions that sort of made this, I think, work well.

The other condition was that it was across the board, as I described earlier, with leaders involved in this professional learning as well, so they felt supported, teachers felt supported by their colleagues, the other teachers, but also by administration who are also co-learners in this process and so it was sort of a school district and school based approach like hey we are going to attack this, we are going to see where this goes, and so really felt supported in an number of ways. So that, that led to sort of the letter-spirit articulation across 5 levels. That's how we articulated it, but of course when we see adoption of policy, you know, implementation, you know, it might not be 5 stages, there could be others, but it's that notion that it's not linear, and it's not a one-shot deal, right? You know, it's actually, it takes time, and it's granular.

**Dr Farrar 38:52**

So, I think maybe to return, and this is kind of bringing us full, full circle, isn't it? That in terms of what teachers should expect from such change, that you might have a sort of a sense at the beginning when you're familiarising yourself with this change and these reforms that you might have that, that "learn the letter" sense yourself, but to expect it to, as the process goes, that you'll move through that sort of sense towards perhaps leading the spirit, and, and, feeling far more, far more comfortable with the reform. Thank you. Are there any other, you know, drawing from the vast work that you've done in this field, you know, are there any other lessons that teachers, teachers in Wales might learn from counterparts in different parts of Canada that you might have come across? Is there anything else that you think would be useful to share at this time?

**Professor DeLuca 39:43**

You know, so as I mentioned at the beginning, Canada has essentially 13 systems of education. Each one is provincial in terms of its jurisdiction, and so each one does slightly different things in terms of policies and practices around curriculum and assessment. British Columbia, as I mentioned, has embarked on a progression-based curriculum over the past number of years so they're someone to look to to see how has that curriculum taken shape, how has it been supported, and how has it actually been implemented on the ground in terms of success, and what has worked there? So that is a space of recent curriculum.

The other one I want to highlight is the Prairie, so Manitoba area, where they've had a policy document from 2006 in assessment. So one of the regions in Canada that have had as assessment, so an assessment only policy document is called Rethinking Classroom Assessment with a Purpose in Mind. It's similar to our Growing Success document but was launched earlier, and I'm highlighting it because there's an example of a place that had, sort of a, I think a fairly progressive policy document in assessment now for, you know, going on 2 decades almost, you know, so how has, sort of a long life around a policy implementation,

what have we learned from that space? And so another space of maybe asking some questions about, I think they've had, they have a different scale and size in terms of sort of population, but I think they've adopted that in some really interesting ways in terms of implementation, so that's another space to maybe turn to and look at, for sort of the opposite of British Columbia. Not for the quick, you know, most recent version, but a longer version of implementation.

**Dr Farrar 41:37**

Great, so that in terms of having a look at how people in the Prairies, how that has been, how has things changed, been embedded in, how it's rolled out, how it's evolved, that's a great suggestion, thank you. So you would be willing for people watching this recording, if there's anything, any questions that emerge, we could perhaps bring these back to you, bring these, if people have kind of context-specific questions as well, that we would hopefully be able to ask them to you at a later stage if that would be alright, Chris?

**Professor DeLuca 42:05**

Yep, I love questions, I'm also happy to share any further resources. I know I speak fairly high level about projects but all of the projects and policies I'm mentioning I can absolutely share. We have them all written up and so we have all these resources that we're happy to share with you and your team as well, so please feel free to reach out.

**Dr Farrar 42:24**

Yes, so thank you very much it was a very enjoyable discussion and I, there's lots for me to take away and think about and lots of parallels and connections that I can make so thank you very, very much, and we'll get back to you with some questions soon and thank you for offering to share more time with us. Thank you very much.

**Professor DeLuca 42:41**

Great – thanks Jen.