

Child Partnership and Voice in Dynamic Assessment and Intervention

Dr Dorothy Howie
School of Psychology
The University of Auckland
D.Howie@auckland.ac.nz
www.nzfeuersteinforum.org

Aim of presentation

- To bring to the attention of practitioners and policy makers the importance of partnership and voice in dynamic assessment and enhancement of cognitive skills, decision-making and self-advocacy
- To address ways of achieving greater partnership and voice not only in terms of rights, but also of capabilities. The late Rom Harré, in writing about how a person 'positions' themselves, outlined the capacity for positioning oneself, the willingness or intention to position oneself, and power to achieve positioning acts' (Howie, 1999). 'Power' relates to rights.

Writings of Dorothy Howie from which this presentation is drawn.

- A comparison between Vygotsky and Feuerstein is drawn from chapter 4 of her 2020 second edition publication 'Thinking about the Teaching of Thinking: The Feuerstein Approach' (London: Routledge)
- The research project detailing the dynamic assessment and enhancement of cognitive, decision-making and self-advocacy skills is also reported in chapter 12 of that book and in the article: Howie (2003) The assessment and training of decision-making and self-advocacy skills. *Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology*, 3, 1 – 26.
- The voice of the child with disability was discussed in Howie (2010), A comparative study of the positioning of children with special educational needs in the legislation of Britain, New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14, 755 – 776.

Vygotsky and Feuerstein in relation to dynamic assessment

- Vygotsky put forward the notion of 'the Proximal (or Potential) Development', which he defined as 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined by problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86.)
- Feuerstein developed his dynamic assessment approach, called the Learning Potential (later Propensity) Assessment Approach, involving a radical restructuring of a wide range of cognitive functions through a test-teach-retest dynamic process (Kozulin, 2014), Feuerstein, Rand and Hoffman (1979); Feuerstein, Feuerstein, Falik and Rand, (2006).
- Both approaches are underpinned by the role of the mediator who 'scaffolds' learning within the 'teaching' phase of the assessment process. For Vygotsky, this included 'cultural' mediation.
- Both look at learning process rather than learning outcome.

The Feuerstein dynamic assessment approach

In the first 1979 (Feuerstein Rand and Hoffman) publication on the Learning Potential Assessment Device Feuerstein presented a strong critique of Standardized testing, including:

- *intelligence seen as a static rather than as a changing entity
- *standardized measurement leading to comparison of the child with a normed population and its subsequent uses for prediction
- *standardized measurement leading to labelling and homogeneous grouping
- *a 'deficit' model

Ruth Deutsch and Yvonne Reynold's UK study of educational psychologists who had some form of dynamic assessment training between 1994-1999

- The writers saw models of mediated dynamic assessment as those of Feuerstein, Haywood, Lidz, Tzuriel and Khan. These were the models where training was most accessible in the UK. They also involved growth of cognitive skills through culturally mediated interaction, using graduated prompts but these were not standardised as in some other dynamic assessment approaches
- 59% of the 88 respondents had used dynamic assessment, and most of these were more experienced educational psychologists (6 plus years).
- Almost all expressed a need for greater dynamic assessment training.
- Of those who had received training (less than half of the 88), 94 % found it useful
- Follow up support was needed, some receiving this from educational psychologists who had undertaken the longest training, and from dynamic assessment support groups
- The value of dynamic assessment was seen, in order of degree of advantage, as practical advice for teachers, positive for child and EP, an alternative to psychometrics, rich in information, and more culture-fair.
- Challenges were constraints of roles and responsibilities, supervision and support (including in linking to curriculum), attitudes of Local Authorities, time, resources and materials.

Description of the Feuerstein Learning Propensity Assessment Device

- This is one of the tools coming out of the Feuerstein approach. It was developed in response to the challenges of assessing enhancing cognitive skills in traumatized children coming to Israel from the Holocaust. Because of this need, the tool was developed to be culture-fair and holistic, addressing cognitive, emotional and social needs
- The assessor uses analytical tools which look at the modality in which the task is presented, the level of complexity, the task content, and the specific cognitive skills and motivational strengths needed for successful performance. These are deliberately manipulated to meet the unique child's responses, with attention to emerging and peaks of performance.
- Graduated prompts are used, but not in a standardized way.
- The attention is on what support can best develop the cognitive skills of the child, with the focus on the process rather than an outcome, or measure of 'potential'

Description of the Feuerstein Learning Propensity Assessment Device (continued)

The Device is made up of a number of assessment tools, adapted for use in a dynamic way. These include:

- Variations on the Standard Matrices (Raven, 1958b)
- Organisation of Dots (Rey and Dupont, 1953)
- Representational Stencil Design (Arthur, 1930)
- Plateau Test (André Rey 1950)
- Complex Figure memory task, as well as other more verbal memory tools.

Research project on the assessment and training of decision-making and self-advocacy skills, which used a Feuerstein dynamic assessment approach

- Participants were from the then Auckland sheltered workshop organization which provided opportunities to adolescents and young adults for work-related skill assessment and placement. Most had a history of mild learning difficulties and past emotional difficulties.
- Of the 24 participants, 14 were of Pakeha ethnic background, 7 Maori, 2 Pasifika, and 1 Indian. (There were initially 40 participants, with a high drop out rate from mainly movement out of their workshop, but also from a small number who decided to opt out of the study at some point.)
- Participants were divided into four groups matched on learning and emotional needs, ethnic background and time in their sheltered workshop.

Research design

- The four matched groups consisted of two experimental groups and two control groups
- The two experimental groups received the full intervention, which focused on developing the problem-solving skill processes involved in decision-making and self-advocacy skills
- One of the two experimental groups and one of the two control groups received dynamic assessment

Research design: The full intervention

The main phases of this full intervention, given in an individual way, but where particularly warranted by the needs of the participant, in a small group way, included:

*Information gathering and understanding about real-life problem solving and self-advocacy, making use of strategies from the Feuerstein approach

*Knowledge acquisition concerning the self-advocacy situations. Use was made of Sievert's (1988) breadth of rights in their training of self-advocacy skills for adults with mild disability, and the New Zealand Youth Law's publication 'When can I' (1990). Basic human rights, community rights and human service rights were covered

*Planning of solution

*Communication of decision-making and self-advocacy

Research design: The dynamic assessment

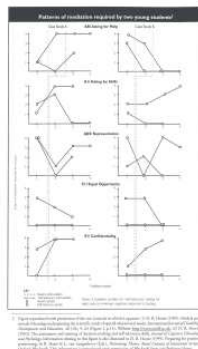
- All participants received assessment on the Ravens Matrices and a measure of self-advocacy developed for the project prior to dynamic assessment and the full intervention, and following these. The self-advocacy measure made use of scenarios experienced in the workshops setting which reflected the rights to be covered. It allowed for an outcome score for correct choice of what to do in a problem-solving situation requiring self-advocacy, as well as a score reflecting the more strategic, task-planning and self-related attributions involved.
- Half of the experimental group and half of the control group received dynamic assessment i.e. two groups each with 6 participants.
- Dynamic assessment for general ability cognitive skills used the Feuerstein Raven's adaptations, which allowed for fine levels of increasing difficulty and multiple examples at each level for training and testing. The self-advocacy dynamic assessment was prepared to allow for the same pattern of graduated prompting. It was in cartoon form, depicting a number of possible solutions for each self-advocacy item.

To examples of the dynamic assessment process and outcomes

- Case study A – a young female Pakeha participant, whose Raven raw score prior to dynamic assessment/mild intervention was 10, and increased to 20 after assessment/intervention. She had experienced long-term segregated school and workshop placement.
- Case study B – a young male Pasifika participant, whose initial Raven score of 11 increased with assessment/mild intervention to 23. He had experienced ordinary classroom placement, leaving school with inadequate literacy skills.
- They showed an individually unique and very different response to the dynamic assessment/mild intervention process

The graduated prompts

- The vertical axis details the 4 levels of prompts required for each level of difficulty, both for the Raven prompt/probe, and the self-advocacy prompt/probe, in order to achieve success on the item.
- These levels were as follows:
 - Level 0 : success with no mediation required
 - Level 1 : the request to 'do it again' (i.e. minimal prompt/mediation)
 - Level 2 : visual focusing, with the tester pointing/tracing the movement required to perceive how the matrix was changing, in order to identify a useful strategy
 - Level 3 : verbal description of the key dimensions to be attended to
 - Level 4 : verbal description and modelling of the strategy



Educational legislation: rights to a voice and participation for the child

- The New Zealand current Education Act gives no clear right to a voice.
- As asked for in a current submission by the Commission for Children, there should be an explicit statement about such a principle from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12).
- The current legislation gives a mixed message regarding consulting with stakeholders, including children and young people, in relation to learning priorities.
- There are still statements which objectify children, such as section 10, 1, 'may require the child...to be produced'
- A new section (35) suggests the development of the following attributes in the child: 'resilience, determination, confidence, and creative and critical thinking', as well as developing skills for 'participation in community life'. It would be better to refer to the key competencies, where 'thinking', and managing self and others could relate more clearly to decision making and self-advocacy skills.

The Learning Support Action Plan

- This new plan has some acknowledgement of the child's voice in planning etc., but there is patchy coverage.
- For example, there is no mention of the child's voice in the sections on both gifted children and disengaged children.
- There is some mention of children's rights, but mainly regarding rights to enroll in a local school

Participation and voice in dynamic assessment: Professor Kathy Greenberg and Lorna Williams (First nation leader in Canada)

- In their 2002 paper 'Reciprocity and mutuality in dynamic assessment' they refer to the Feuerstein approach which does not require a standardized graduated prompting system, found in some other approaches to dynamic assessment. They consider that this allows for greater reciprocity and mutuality between the assessor and the learner being assessed.
- They refer to Martin Buber's 'I-Thou' relationship in its respect and affirmation of the partner, which informs their view of the importance of reciprocity, partnership, and empowerment of the learner in dynamic assessment.