

# How to Make Change Work?

Dr. Sonja Sentočnik

CIDREE 'Effective Assessment for Learning' Conference,  
Ljubljana, 21-22 June, 2012



The National Education Institute Slovenia

# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Define the change;
- Clarify the urgency for this change, its benefits and strategies;
- Think about:
  - the nature of this change and its implications at micro, mezo, and macro level;
  - What contributes to successful implementation of a change such as assessment for learning in schools?
  - What have best practices taught us?

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What can governments/ministries/external agencies do to support assessment for learning in schools?
- What can schools do? (*How* can they do it?)
- What can teachers do?

# What Change?

- **Refocusing** from *assessment of learning* to *assessment for learning* – each has its place but the purpose is different.

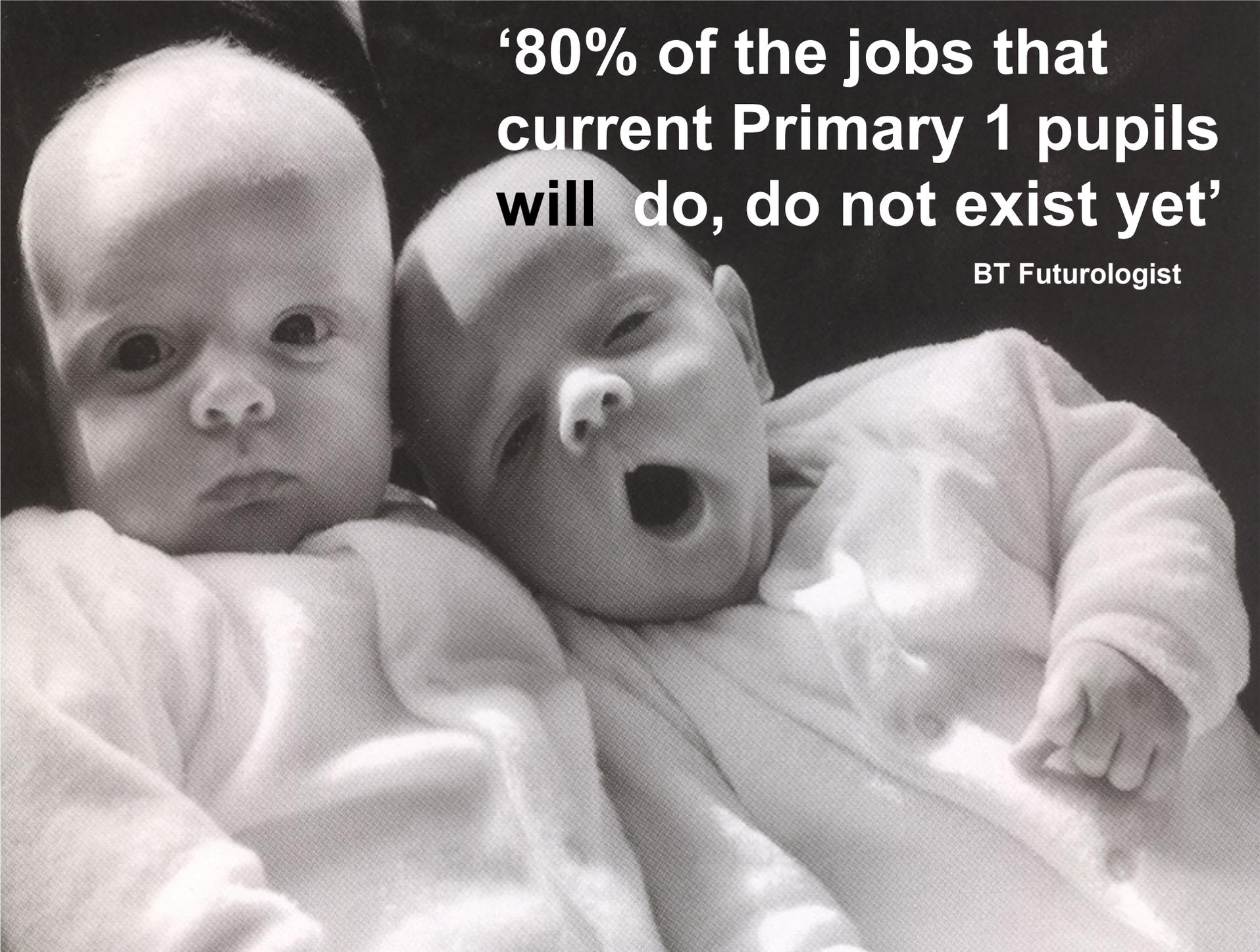
**Not either/or but *achieving a better balance between the two***  
(at present **assessment of learning dominates** with all the consequences for teaching, learning, quality of knowledge...)

# WHY CHANGE?



## Are grades really the evidence

- that real learning has happened?
- that teachers and schools are delivering?
- that we are preparing the students for their successful life and work in the global society?



**‘80% of the jobs that  
current Primary 1 pupils  
will do, do not exist yet’**

BT Futurologist

## Research:

- **William&Black** (since 1984): *Through a **consistent** and **effective** use of assessment for learning, students learn at a double rate (achive in six months what they would otherwise in a year!);*

# Research

- **Wiggins** (1998) – *formative assessment (feedback as central to true learning) provides systematic support to students and teachers to self-correct their performance. Regardless of their technical soundness, audit tests cannot do that, and are not meant to do it;*



# Research

- **Fullan (2003)** – successful learning occurs when learners have *ownership* of their learning, for which they have to understand the goals they are aiming at. Proper use of assessment for learning **increases motivation & the skill to achieve success.**
- *Ignoring this change means that we are missing on an important strategy for raising standards and empowering lifelong learning in our schools.*



# When Using Assessment for Learning...

What's Going on in the Classroom	Benefits for the Student	Benefits for the Teacher

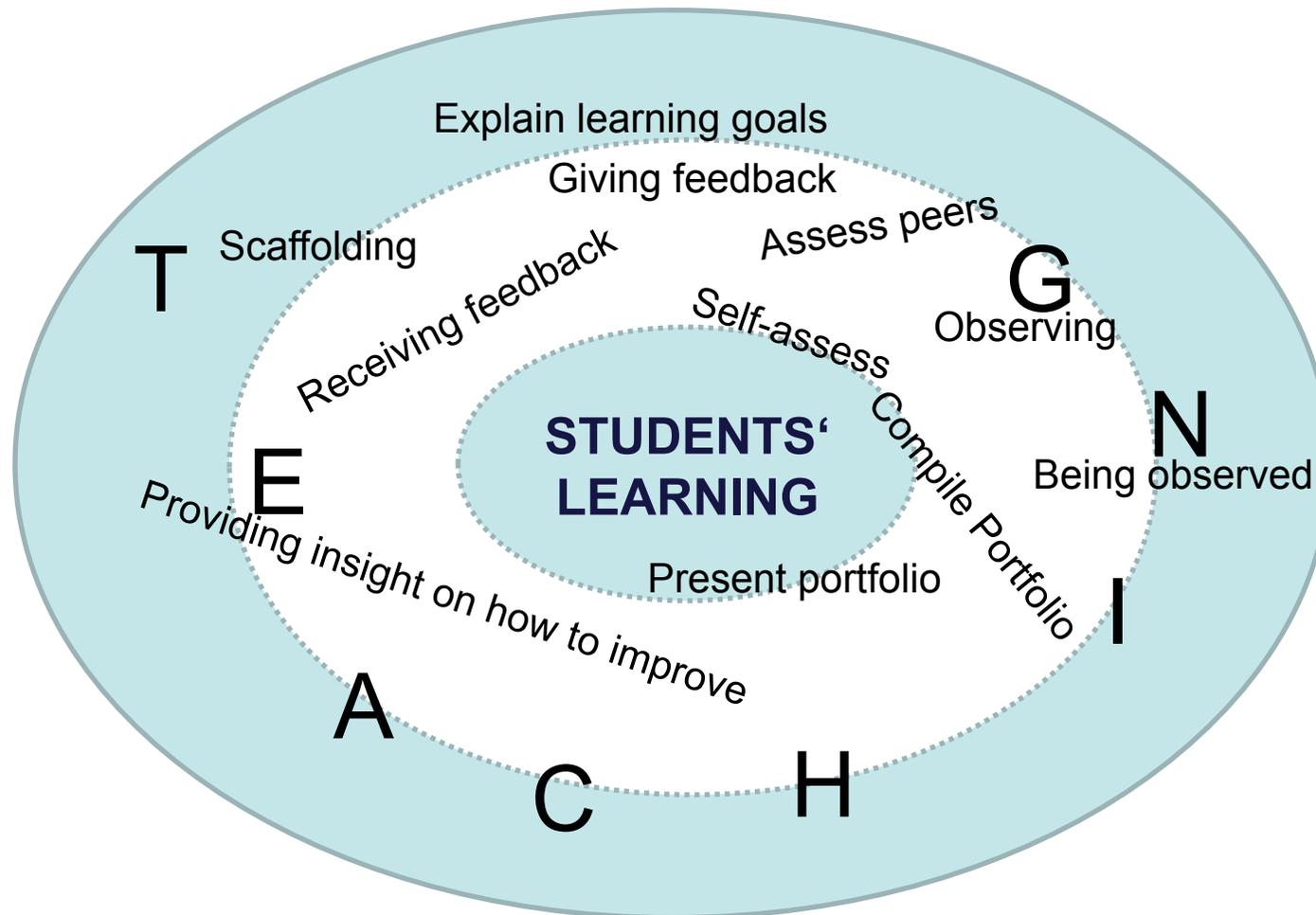


# Assessment for Learning in Action

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rL54bfmZPzY&feature=related>



# BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING



# Basic Principles

1. Assessment **process** is seamlessly embedded in teaching and learning, (not separated from it, not a test done once, after teaching and learning is over), it is *essential part of learning*;
2. Teachers use assessment results from *various sources* (observations, portfolio, conferences with students) *to plan instruction*;
3. Instruction is planned *for the students* and not for covering the material;
4. Students *understand learning goals* from very beginning of the teaching & learning process;
5. Students work together and *critique* one another's work using carefully prepared assessment criteria;
6. Assessment results are consistently translated into *informative* (not merely judgmental) *feedback*, providing students specific insight on how to improve;
7. *All* students are required *to revise* their work, quality is not an option.

# ADDED VALUE

high motivation  
to achieve

strong performance gains  
weak and strong students alike

faster progress

misunderstandings revealed

self-correction

involvement of students in  
goal setting

ownership of learning

clarity about standards and criteria

early prevention of failure

multiple opportunities to  
master complex tasks

adapting pace of learning

self-adjustment



# Benefits, Added Value

- Strong *performance gains* over time for *all* students; Faster progress;
- Students possess a good deal of knowledge that hides a great deal of misunderstanding – *misunderstandings revealed*, students provided with challenges to question, deepen their understanding, and *self-correct*;
- Students learn through *self- and peer-assessment* and through receiving *feedback and guidance* on how they are doing against the criteria of exemplary performance, which supports their *self-adjustment* and *self-correction - life-long learning skills!*;
- Students are *involved* in goal setting – clarity about expectations, *standards and criteria* – essential for ability for self-correcting performance, *high motivation to achieve*;
- Students get *multiple opportunities* to master complex tasks – high expectations for every student (every student can achieve, can be successful) as opposed to ‘gotcha attitude’ of one-shot tests ...

# Implications?

- ❖ **micro level** (teacher, classroom, instruction);
- ❖ **mezo level** (school, teachers and principal, students, parents);
- ❖ **macro level** (national policy, curriculum, external assessment practice and its importance, participation in international testing).

# Implications

## at micro, mezo, macro levels

- **Role of Teacher and Delivery of Instruction**

Direction of communication in the classroom? Who's the source of knowledge? What kind of knowledge? What skills? What does the teacher do? What do students do? In-classroom structural arrangements?

- **School Functioning** Length of class periods? school bell? Fragmentation of curriculum? Teacher collaboration vs. teacher isolation?

- **School Leadership** Division/sharing of responsibility? Role of principal?

- **National Policy** What are testing practices? Central/site-based curriculum? What's curriculum like? How is it perceived? What's considered evidence of school & teacher accountability? Where is the money poured? What is the focus of teacher education and in-service professional development?

# What kind of change is REFOCUSING TOWARD ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

LOWER ORDER	HIGHER ORDER
<p><b>Small scale:</b> Implemented by one teacher or a team; Affects one person or a group, not in a profound way.</p> <p><b>Simple:</b> Requires new technical skill, e.g., use of new textbook; new way of recording grades;</p> <p><i>Source: BASICS Project</i></p>	<p><b>Large scale:</b> Implemented at level of school/at national level; Large effect.</p> <p><b>Complex:</b> Requires paradigm shift:     mental models, beliefs, norms, standard operating procedures, culture;     ‘de-learning’ the existent way of work and functioning.</p> <p>Requires changes in perception of role:     Individual teacher autonomy replaced by collective autonomy; teacher as “know all” replaced by teacher as coach, mentor.</p> <p>Teacher focus on classroom broadened to focus on school success – my students vs. our students....</p>

# PERCEPTION OF CHANGE

- How we Perceive Change depends on where we are as a school/individual;
- Perception of Change is directly related to strategies used for its implementation;

# **‘When the winds of change come, some build walls, others build windmills’**

*Ancient Chinese proverb*



- Lower order change can be implemented by directly telling people what to do;
- Higher order change is a **process** that requires changing:
  - school culture
  - norms and values
  - individual and group beliefs, perceptions – mental models
  - power and responsibility distribution
  - relationships
  - routines and habits
  - standard operating procedures...

# How Do We Implement Higher Order Change?

- Making teachers understand what needs to be done is not difficult;
- Changing their habits and perceptions *is!*
  - Why change something that has been successful?
  - Nobody can force me to change as long as I have good results on the “matura” exam.
  - Not covering the syllabus (content) would mean that I am not doing my job as a teacher.
  - I don't have time for formative assessment....

## Implementing Change in Schools

- **Schools** are **loosely coupled systems**, consisting of autonomous entities (from individual teacher to departments to grade-level teachers...) continually searching for identity and direction (Fullan);
- School is a **complex system** characterized by *uncertainty*, *unpredictability*, and *lack of stability* (Elliot);
- Teachers are **professionals** valuing their **autonomy**;
- **Fragmented individualism** is typical in schools ...

# Implications...

- Change **cannot be mandated**;
- Change is **a journey**, not a blueprint;
- **Neither** centralization nor decentralization **works**;
- Individualism and collectivism must have **equal power**;
- **Every person** is a change agent; Every person contributes the essential part, without it **the system** does not improve;
- People need **pressure** to change (*what kind of pressure for professionals?*);
- People need **support** to change.

*Fullan: Change Forces, 1993*



# Learning from Best Practices

## Successful Schools:

- A laser focus on instruction (don't forget you are doing it for the students)
- Rather than simply introducing reform and hope for the best
  - **involve** teachers, parents & students in defining the purpose (*why this change?*); **create a sense of urgency** (*why now? Why can't we wait?*);
  - Help people **visualize** what it will look like when in place (clear expectations: *what will be different, better, added value?*)
  - Provide a **safe environment** and **time** for teacher dialogue (big picture, meaning of change, pros and cons, how to **integrate change** into classroom practice instead of adding it);
  - **Respect** the resisters;
  - Develop a **climate of trust**;
  - Develop a **climate of inquiry**;

# Learning from Best Practices (cont.)

## Successful Schools:

- Develop a **learning community**;
- Provide **on-going, on-site professional development** according to need, and a **coach** to support implementation;
- **Share responsibility and decision making**;
- Build **broad leadership capacity**;
- **Distribute leadership** throughout the school;
- Develop **multidirectional communication** at all levels;
- Provide opportunities for **meaningful teacher interaction**;
- Foster a **collective sense of engagement**;
- **Link training to actual experience** in the classroom;
- Build **collaborative and collegial culture**;

# What External Change Agents Should Know

- *Every change throws a system out of balance:* we have to expect restlessness, doubts, seeming disorder – support the system to find its own equilibrium by providing professional development according to need, feedback, critical friendship;
- Change is implemented first *by the individual* (it's a personal experience) then by the community – support changing of individual beliefs and values, encourage expression of disagreement, provide time for building common vision before expecting change of practice;
- Deep change requires changing mental models – not by force or persuasion but rather *by enabling teachers to apply action research ....*



# What Works at the System Level

- **Combining top-down initiative** (without it, change can move in a wrong direction, people do not persist), **with bottom-up capacity building**;
- **Balancing chaos and order**: too much chaos brings us back to where we started. Too much order leads to fear, resistance and even to passive dependency;
- **Balancing pressure and support** (hold teachers/schools accountable but adapt the pace; let people decide then set clear goals; don't provide expert answers and solutions from the top, let people experiment, learn new ways, be skeptical but make sure they move forward).

# Barriers...

## Gap between the intent of reform and its implementation:

- Changing *the organizational structure to accommodate change* (e.g., teaching in blocks to implement assessment for learning) without attending to *school culture* and providing *professional development* is doomed to failure;
  - Teachers do not believe that anything is wrong with the way they teach and assess;
  - They learn how to use, e.g., portfolio but have no knowledge and no experience of making it part of instruction, **it becomes an addition**;
  - They do not know how to connect with students on a different level (loss of authority);
  - The principal is not interested in what teachers are doing as long as they keep high achievement results on external exams.

## Barriers...(cont.)

### Gap between bottom up and top down implementation

- Change is a principal's idea; teachers do not feel the ownership;
- Change has nothing to do with state/nationwide policy;
- Change is mandated by the state without involving the schools into decision making; Teachers do not trust the government's motives for change – real improvement for students or politics?
- Teachers are not sure what and why they should change;
- Teachers feel they do not have time for change;
- School's accountability is measured by the achievement on external test results; Funding is based on school's success on external tests.

## Barriers...(cont.)

### Gap between what leaders do and what they say

- We have “ collaborative culture“ - staff meetings: a series of lectures, announcements, warnings;
- We have “ high expectations“ – implement policies encouraging good grades for poor student performance;
- We have “ the culture of respect“ – unequal treatment of teachers, ignoring some, praising others, sending angry emails, punish mistakes;

# What can an individual (teacher, principal), school, and government do?

Goal/ Key Strategy	Teacher/Principal	School	Government
<p><b>Goal:</b> Implementation of assessment for learning</p> <p><b>Key Strategy:</b> Plan and deliver instruction <i>for the students</i> and not for covering the material</p>			