

How teachers have responded to the ACTS materials and Professional Development

After The ACTS materials had been developed by a group of expert tutors and teachers they were trialled with a cohort of experienced teachers, that is two thirds of the 20 plus teachers had been teaching for more than 10 years and all had taught for more than three years.

These teachers had a range of experience coming from primary and secondary education and, in the secondary group, having English, science, music and religious education specialisms. The majority of teachers had experience of teaching English. Many of these teachers went on to share the ACTS professional development experience with their colleagues, often leading school-based training or using the materials in a coaching role with less experienced teachers. Many used the materials, in an adapted form, with their pupils. These are their comments:

In the beginning...

Experienced teachers typically said this after they were first introduced to the ACTS materials in a half-day training session:

What I like about ACTS so far:

- *It gives me different ways to assess students thinking and allows me to get other staff to also reflect on their classroom practice and students thinking.*
- *Variety of tools and can therefore select which to use based on ideal outcome ie. assessing thinking skills as is, moving teaching on etc.*
- *I like that it is a way of looking specifically looking at different aspects of the development of thinking and cognitive processes in a lesson through a variety of different tools*
- *Range of different assessment materials, the thoroughness of resources and accessibility, how it can be generalised across the curriculum making it relevant to teachers.*
- *The assessment tools are very transferable and provide a wide range of models to work with a variety of year groups, subjects and teachers*
- *Illustrations are easy to follow and transferable.*
- *Encouraged me to consider how I facilitate quality discussions within the class.*
- *It's really interesting and I am keen to read more about it.*
- *Quick familiarity with useful tools*

I can see ACTs might help me with:

- *Assessing students thinking in my classroom and progressing thinking.*
- *My own evaluative processes of my own teaching as well as using as a tool for staff reflection and development in how we can deepen and develop children's thinking.*
- *Department development and extending thinking of individuals*
- *Assessing thinking skills as they have developed across our school.*
- *Improve standards of teaching and learning through teacher depth of knowledge and agency*
- *As a reminder of the pedagogical theories behind my choices.*
- *Being more reflective in how I listen to and question students during lessons*
- *Assessment and tracking of thinking skills, analysis of teacher questioning*
- *Developing pupil talk and also developing teachers' skills in facilitating deeper learning.*

- *Developing reasoning skills, particularly in preparation for the national tests*
- *The illustrations will provide concrete real life examples of the use of the tools*
- *Developing colleagues' abilities to really/honestly challenge pupils*
- *Development of awareness of thinking of children giving staff useful ways of developing ideas about thinking*
- *My professional development and coaching others in theirs.*

In the end.....

Experienced teachers said this after a period of 4 months of trying the ACTS materials:

ACTS in general made a difference as follows:

- *ACTS is really a CPD package to help teachers gain an insight into thinking in a classroom*
- *I found the ACTS CPD a more worthwhile CPD as it really allowed review of own practice and the tools were easily adaptable*
- *Tools are flexible so they can be widened or sharpened to suit the school need/context*
- *The extra reading supported the understanding of the tool*
- *Tools help us to see differently, detail to help form observations based on deeper theories of education, thinking and learning*
- *It is really interesting how many of us used the tools to help move on our students! Helping our understanding of what they think and how they think.*
- *It helped me to model to my class the thought processes and vocabulary used to help build upon and explore thinking*
- *It provided an explanatory tool for a learning walk for example that students could be observed being accountable for the knowledge they held by the way they explained it (using because) and making reference to text*
- *Naming and labelling thought patterns is useful for our own concrete thinking*
- *ACTS is a teacher's journey through a different thinking process*
- *ACTS can be frightening – it signals change to secure current pedagogical practice - may be framed as 'another view'.*

How we use ACTS

- *This is a resource for teachers of thinking who want to go deeper*
- *These are generalizable tools, not tied to a subject or age group*
- *I think the activities would work best if first introduced to small groups of teachers*
- *Works best if teachers have specific planning time (facilitated) to help them apply the tool to different contexts*
- *Works best if you just focus on one at a time (for teachers who are new to it)*
- *The use of ACTS puts one in control of one's own development. It can be used on your own, at a time and location of your choosing*
- *The tools are malleable they have multiple uses:*
 - *use within CPD and personal reflection*
 - *use as a whole school for collaborative development, whole school evaluation, a focus for development*
 - *content and ages can change from illustration*
- *A lot of participants have adapted the tools to share with students this seemed quite powerful where done by some colleagues*
- *Where the tools are being used with children – it helps the children identify (for example) the language of accountable talk*
- *Not easy to access when teachers are unfamiliar with the broader pedagogical approaches to actively prompt thinking*

- *The easy examples can be used as an NQT reflective tool*

When using ACTS materials, what went well?

- *Ones I used were accessible and promoted dialogue between myself and colleagues about how we can analyse thinking and facilitate deeper thinking through teacher intervention-questioning*
- *Applicable to different age groups and different subject areas. Able to use the tools to successfully identify where students were in their thinking and reflect as a teacher on how to progress students thinking.*
- *The intellectual exercise of reading material. Applying what I had read to the student experience.*
- *It made me more reflective about my own practice and what I was observing*
- *Enabled me to recognise when I needed to step back and allow thinking to develop; also moments when I need to be equipped with better questions to probe/push thinking to develop.*
- *The specific tools will enable teachers in our school who are not able to see and assess valuable thinking in their classes. Will also support training/coaching of other members of staff. Will be used in review of teacher practice and support talk less teaching.*
- *Materials provided were accessible to staff member who hadn't attended training, although she is familiar with Let's Think methodology. Tools were easily applied to all curriculum areas.*
- *I feel that the NQT who I work with has had a big shift in her thinking and approach to facilitating effective problem solving in maths.*