EDITORIAL

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This third issue of *Assessment Matters* addresses a number of topics that span the complexity and nature of assessment as it is understood and practised in a range of educational settings, in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. Through the papers one can see the multiple, often competing, roles that assessment plays in schools, and the complexity of teachers' roles within that. There is no doubt that, to enact educational policies for effective pedagogy that integrates assessment for learning as well as for accountability, the onus of responsibility rests with school leaders and teachers.

Lenore Adie explores how teachers who work in the standards-based assessment system of Queensland can develop their assessment practices and identity as teachers through their participation in online social moderation meetings. Adie examines the role that technology plays in supporting or hindering teachers in this process, by collecting qualitative data from observations of 11 online moderation meetings and interviews with the teachers involved in these meetings. The study provides insights into the relationship of the technology with the teachers' development of a shared meaning and common practices within a standards-based assessment system.

In the second paper, Mere Berryman and Paul Woller address a need identified by teachers in Māori language education settings for a method to identify the oral Māori language proficiency of new-entrant students. Berryman and Woller develop three assessment tools that use a process that takes into account the responsive social and cultural contexts in which learning takes place. The assessment tools and process promote culturally responsive contexts in which students talk about topics of interest. The authors examine the instruments for cultural legitimacy and psychometric validity.

Gavin Brown argues that the conceptions teachers have about assessment influence their practices. He also argues that teachers' conceptions of assessment are influenced by the system and policy frameworks in which they work. Brown examines the extent to which this is so for New Zealand primary and secondary school teachers through the Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment (TCoA–IIIA) self-administered survey inventory. Brown's previously reported four-factor conception of assessment (i.e., assessment is for improvement; as irrelevant; for school accountability; and for student accountability) was largely supported for both groups. However, the student accountability conception was more strongly endorsed by secondary teachers than primary teachers. This is, he argues, consistent with their role in administering the New Zealand qualifications system.

The role of teachers' beliefs is also examined in the paper by Helen Dixon, who investigates primary school teachers' beliefs and understandings about feedback, and the use of feedback to enhance student learning. Dixon uses an interpretive, qualitative case study methodology involving 20 teachers. As she examined teachers' discourse about feedback she found that teachers' beliefs in their own competence to provide effective feedback influenced the extent to which they were able and willing to adopt new ideas and practices associated with assessment for learning and feedback. Dixon explored teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in relation to the changes teachers made to their feedback practice, the amount of effort they made to change, their willingness to persevere and their resilience.

A revised New Zealand curriculum necessitated a project to align requirements for high-stakes secondary school assessments (National Certificate of Educational Achievement, or NCEA, standards) with curriculum aims and intentions. The paper by Martin East and Adèle Scott documents the process of revising the NCEA standards and the potential for positive washback into classrooms in terms of enhancing pedagogical "good practice" within a new learning area, that of Learning Languages. East and Scott write the paper from the perspective of two people who were centrally involved in the process of writing the standards. This perspective provides an opportunity to explore the NCEA alignment process for a new learning area from the inside and to describe the deliberations and considerations that went into the revised standards.

Eleanor Hawe and Isabel Browne investigate the one-to-one student interview assessment approach used by New Zealand's National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP). Each year, approximately 100 teachers are employed for a period of five weeks to administer the individualised assessments to students in a standardised manner. This paper examines the variation *within* individual teacher administrators' practice as they conducted interviews during the 2005 round of national monitoring in social studies. Hawe and Browne randomly selected 12 teacher administrators and observed the videotapes of each teacher administering three selected social studies tasks to three students. The authors argue that the variations observed *within* individual teacher administrators' practice were related to elements of the specific assessment tasks and their interpretations of these tasks, as well as to their subject knowledge, their understanding of the administrator's role and their understanding of the "standardised" one-to-one interview process. The findings are discussed in terms of the potential threats to reliability and validity of information gathered.

The ways in which teachers adopt best practice models of assessment are examined at close range by Brenda Fa'alogo McNaughton. She argues that "the effect of these best practice strategies is greatly increased when there is a meeting of minds between teachers, students, school managers, academics, policy makers and, increasingly, educational consultants". Fa'alogo McNaughton conducted an observational case study as a basis for understanding the effect of assessment innovations in classrooms and schools. She uses problem-based methodology to examine why teachers choose particular assessment practices, as well as describing what they do. Problem-based methodology allows one to consider the practices that a teacher adopts—"solutions"—to their competing teaching roles and responsibilities—"problems". The analysis provides a useful basis for determining how professional learning should take place in order for real, sustainable change to be seen.

Louis Volante and Lorenzo Cherubini examined the challenges for school leaders in Ontario, Canada in building assessment literacy—particularly in teachers' understanding of the principles and practices of sound assessment—within their respective primary and secondary

schools. In Ontario, the two broad categories of educational assessment are classroom assessment and large-scale assessment. School leaders were interviewed and asked to share successes and challenges with various types of assessment. The findings revealed an imbalance between formative and summative assessment practices. In addition, a range of attitudinal, structural and resource factors impede school leaders' ability to foster changes that align with recent assessment research. Volante and Cherubini discuss the implications of the findings in relation to instructional leadership, capacity building and educational reform.

The paper by Rangimarie Mahuika, Mere Berryman and Russell Bishop is titled "Issues of Culture and Assessment in New Zealand Education Pertaining to Māori Students". In this paper, the authors argue the case for culturally responsive approaches to pedagogy for Māori students that recognise the diversity among Māori students. They discuss the ways in which the principles and practices of assessment for learning, including feedback, approaches to assessment and inquiry-based practices, contribute to a culturally responsive pedagogy.

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