

Editorial

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Welcome to a further issue of *Assessment Matters*. As we approach the conclusion of another decade, assessment along with everything else appears to be changing and shifting in form and function. One such change has been the accelerating growth of the use of electronic tools for assessment purposes. This trend includes personal tools such as mobile phones and tablets, online testing platforms, item-optimisation programmes, digital tools to support teachers in making judgements, and the introduction of online examinations. Even a quick skim through recent conference programmes from AERA, ITC, and ICME, for example, reveal significant focus on this technological revolution.

Following on from the article on the use of iPads in formative assessment in the last issue of *Assessment Matters*, Michelle Searle, Lori Kirkpatrick, Rachel Smythe, and Michela Paolini have contributed an article to this issue regarding the use of iPads within summative assessment. In this they examine how providing all students and teachers in one school district in Canada influenced the summative assessment practices of the teachers. The evidence from this study led the authors to speculate that having the technology on hand and in use is a catalyst for rethinking teachers' assessment practices. Among the ways that assessment practice may be re-thought owing to the ubiquity of technology, a standout idea is that of increasing student agency and shifting teachers' understanding towards student-centred approaches to assessment.

Student-centred learning processes and their relationships with assessment are also central to Anna Fletcher's article in this issue. In this conceptual piece, Fletcher argues that teaching and assessment discourses across the Western world can be thought of as having traversed three generations underpinned by different theoretical viewpoints, most recently by socio-cognitive perspectives. This article overviews the three sequential generations and then examines how the latest socio-cognitive informed generation can offer an understanding of assessment as a student-centred learning process.

Student-centredness is also at the centre of Lyn McDonald's article. Located in the tertiary context, her focus is on the assessment of student teachers in the practicum component of their programme of teacher education. McDonald argues that assessment in this context is high stakes because of the tension that failure to meet requirements could result in not graduating, and because in this programme these students are challenged to acquire the skills of self-regulated learning. The evidence from this doctoral study provides a window into both the "how" of this type of practice assessment and the issues that face evaluators when they are also trying to promote self-assessment approaches.

In New Zealand, the election of a Labour-led coalition government in November 2017 has led to a huge review of education at all levels of the system. First, mandatory reporting of student outcomes against National Standards in primary schooling was removed. This was quickly followed by an announcement that the entire early childhood, schooling system, and polytechnic system would be reviewed. As well as review of the structural system of schooling, teacher accreditation, and the funding model, assessment has not escaped attention. As well as the changes to National Standards, the system of national qualifications for secondary schools, the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA), is under review and experiencing a tidal shift towards electronic assessment processes.

In keeping with the spirit of development in assessment, an article focusing on sustaining assessment for learning as a focus in New Zealand is included in this issue. In this article, Jenny Poskitt argues that it's not enough to have a policy exhorting teachers to use assessment for learning. Nor is it sufficient to provide professional development for teachers in the hope that they will use assessment for learning. Rather, Poskitt theorises that all players need to understand a policy is needed, what the policy means, how to enact it, and that all are empowered to enact in order for the policy to take on life in the schooling sector. In other words, Poskitt argues a connected system system is required to bring policy to life in practice and her recommendation is for the establishment of such a network to deliberately connect and foster relationships across and beyond education in order to forge the partnerships necessary to sustain assessment for learning both in policy and in practice.

As a result of the efforts of Jenny Poskitt, Michael Absolum, and a band of helpers from across the country and across different education sectors, a new organisation, the New Zealand Assessment Institute (NZAI) was established in October 2017. The purpose was to provide a network such as argued for in the Poskitt article in this issue. In April 2018 the NZAI held its first three seminars, one each in Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland. Set up in the belief that New Zealand has many talented assessment-capable educators, NZAI brought together people from across the education sector to share, learn more, and collaborate to improve assessment practices. The final contribution in this issue summarises the seminars and what was learnt about where we are now in assessment in New Zealand and where to next.

On a final note, as this issue exemplifies, *Assessment Matters* welcomes articles of many kinds, including empirical and theoretical articles, practice-focused pieces, news about the assessment world, and commentaries. Please share this issue with friends, colleagues, and postgraduate students, and encourage them to contribute. The editorial committee and reviewers are supportive and do their best to help authors to get their articles published. We especially welcome new academic authors and postgraduate students to contribute articles which advance the field.

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