

# Editorial

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18296/am.0014>

It's my pleasure to introduce the 2016 issue of *Assessment Matters*. This year we celebrate the publication of the 10th issue; a real milestone. Since beginning in 2009, there has been an issue each year as well as two special issues; one addressing assessment education for preservice teachers in New Zealand and the second featuring assessment equity, fairness, and inclusion. In the ten issues since the journal began, articles have originated from ten countries stretching from Scandinavia, across North America and the Pacific. There has been, however, a focus on Western and relatively high-performing education systems. As a now well-established international assessment journal, it seems time to extend the equity focus. For example, educational assessment and outcomes in the developing world have not yet been noticed in *Assessment Matters*. Working with colleagues in such countries, particularly in South Africa, it is clear to me that assessment use and pedagogy is a critical piece in improving education. There are research and development projects in many of these places but to date, we know little about the challenges these systems face and the assessment approaches that might work best in these contexts to address enormous equity issues.

This 10th issue begins to take up the equity challenge by publishing an article about the ways tertiary academics in Vietnam are attempting to incorporate assessment for learning strategies and philosophies within an Eastern context. Nhat Ho, Lenore Adie, and Val Klenowski provide a window into the use of assessment for learning practices in a Vietnamese university setting. As they say, although assessment for learning can positively impact learning, integrating it within Confucian-influenced contexts is very challenging. Three university teachers are observed endeavouring to use assessment for learning in their own teaching and their students are interviewed about how they experienced these innovations. The article makes a contribution to understanding how concepts such as assessment for learning, to date used mostly in Western contexts, can be implemented in culturally relevant and appropriate ways elsewhere. This article is a welcome contribution to other work in assessment that considers how the cultural embeddedness of assessment is critical in any movement of change.

A second article at the tertiary level reviews the surprisingly small amount of research available regarding the role of e-learning in assessment education for preservice teachers. Chi Yan Lam, Catherine Donnelly, Judy Woods, and Lyn Shulha, from Canada, found just six articles in the education research databases regarding this assessment aspect and make the valid point that there is a great deal of scope for further research in this area. Although they suggest that maybe there is not a great deal of use of e-learning in assessment education, the rapid growth of learning management systems, social media use in the tertiary classroom and apps suggests that while tertiary teaching may be changing rapidly towards e-learning, published research may not be keeping up with this trend. The authors suggest three productive uses of e-learning in assessment education in the future, opening the way for both innovative teaching and new research in preparing teachers for the 21st century.

The third article argues that all too often assessment doesn't fully recognise emergent learning and, perhaps worse, limits student learning by inherently devaluing any learning outside the outcomes we measure. Working from a complexity frame, Benjamin Bolden and Chris DeLuca from Canada explore expanded conceptions and practices of assessment that both recognise and promote emergent forms of learning. The article opens with a vignette, which although unique and specific to a particular context, epitomises the sort of experiences most teachers will have pondered about within their own practice. In a schooling world that has rapidly become measured, accounted for, and perhaps somewhat sterile as a result, this is a future-focused piece that asks what role assessment can play in recognising and promoting emergent learning within a standards-based, accountability framework of education. As well as identifying and considering how emergent learning might be acknowledged within a criterion-based assessment system, these authors tackle a further aim: how assessment can be used to provoke emergence. In pursuit of quality forms of assessment we are provided here with ideas that will spur educators to "measure and incite the magic of emergent learning" (p. 71).

In the New Zealand context, the challenge is on to find ways to use assessment not simply to identify the inequities produced through education, but also to find ways to use assessment to challenge inequity, in all its forms and appearances.

In the secondary school history context, Michael Johnston and Mark Sheehan reveal the complexities and disparities in the assessment of historical thinking within the qualifications system. Drawing on an exploratory study of over 2,500 secondary school history students, they demonstrate that while boys are not achieving as well as girls in national assessments in history, boys thought more critically about the past. Within the gender debates about education it is a rare study that draws upon such a large sample. This article challenges what we assess as well as how we regard assessment in historical thinking and gendered learning.

Finally, also in the New Zealand context, Amanda Caldwell and Eleanor Howe delve into primary school teachers' use of the Progressive Achievement Test: Mathematics tests (PAT Maths) in the New Zealand context. The PATs have been available to New Zealand teachers since the 1950s, but have been recently updated to match the New Zealand curriculum and now include an online marking service. In New Zealand there are no compulsory tests for primary school students. Instead, there are a range of assessment tools provided free by the Ministry of Education and at reasonable cost by other organisations. The PAT Maths is of the latter type and very commonly purchased and used by schools. While acknowledging the limitations of the small sample size in their study, Caldwell and Howe reveal how and why six teachers from two schools used this tool in rather limited and, at times, concerning ways. All used the results mainly for accountability purposes relying mostly on stanine scores. The authors discuss what the reasons for the teachers' inappropriate and limited use of the results might be and the ways in which computerised school systems can encourage such use. Like other authors before them, they point to the need for school leaders both to be assessment literate and to lead robust assessment for learning practices within their schools.

The journal closes with a book review. Wenjing Yao examines *Assessing Foreign Language Students' Spoken Proficiency* by Martin East, recently published by Springer.

Thus, the 10th issue of *Assessment Matters* celebrates diversity. It offers articles from New Zealand, as well as Canada and Vietnam, on topics of interest to assessment educators, scholars, and policy makers. But the

time is right to extend this reach by increasing the number of articles from other cultures, non-English-speaking countries, and from the developing world. Please take this as an invitation to encourage your colleagues and scholars in your network to submit manuscripts to *Assessment Matters* to help build a more equitable educational assessment trend everywhere.

*Mary Hill*  
*Editor*