



Learning to be assessment capable teachers

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Research has shown that using assessment in the service of student learning (assessment for learning) is essential to improving student outcomes, particularly of those students most at risk of low achievement. This project addresses gaps in our knowledge about how pre-service teachers learn to use such assessment during their teacher education programmes.

Aims

The project aims to enhance our understanding of how pre-service teachers learn to use assessment in the service of (primary) students' and (early childhood) children's learning. To achieve this aim the project seeks to:

- identify what pre-service teachers believe and understand about using assessment for learning at entry and exit from their programmes
- document and disseminate how pre-service teachers learn to enhance their use of assessment for learning through their teacher education programmes
- make recommendations to assist teacher educators to increase the likelihood of graduating teachers who are 'assessment capable'

Why is this important?

Assessment for learning (AfL) practices have been shown to improve student outcomes in a range of ways.

- AfL motivates students to engage in learning and keep them trying;
- It provides timely and sufficient feedback ;
- AfL is valid, fair and culturally responsive , and;
- It is purposeful and suited to purpose.

Effective AfL classroom practices create a teaching and learning climate that facilitates learners being actively involved in monitoring their own learning and developing the skills necessary to become autonomous learners. Such student and teacher 'assessment capability' is fundamental to new *Directions for Assessment in New Zealand*.

What we plan to do

Data

Over three years we will systematically investigate the assessment knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of the 2010 first year cohorts of pre-service teachers at four NZ universities using questionnaires when they enter their teacher education programme, and at the end of each year of study. Case studies will examine how pre-service teachers at each institution learn to use assessment through their courses and practicum experiences. In addition, case study students (10 in each institution) will undertake 'assessment task scenarios' where it will be possible to explore in more depth their emerging understanding and skills with the information gained from an assessment task, and the way they use information to assist learners' next steps.

Within each institution, professional conversations with teacher educators involved in teaching aspects of assessment will be held on a regular basis. The intention of these conversations is to capture teacher educators' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about assessment, to explore the challenges and opportunities for enhancing assessment curriculum and delivery and to disseminate results of the study.

Regular analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data will form the basis of regional as well as national discussions and decision-making about assessment curriculum and delivery, and will inform subsequent phases of the project over the three-year period.

It is intended that a national network of assessment teacher educators-researchers will be established to provide a forum for ongoing professional learning and research regarding assessment pedagogy.

Our partners:

The national research team constitutes the partnership. The co-PIs bring different and complementary skills and experiences to this project. Lisa and Alison will lead the survey aspects of the study; Mary and Bronwen the case study and focus groups aspects. The teacher educator-researchers will work with the co-PI in each university to collect and interpret data, disseminate findings and to build more relevant teacher education in assessment through iterative applications of the findings where appropriate. Because each university teacher education programme is unique, the research team (co-PI and teacher educator-researchers) will need to adapt the research project to the local situation, a process that, in itself, builds research capability among the members of the team.

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