

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING ASSESSMENT IN EDUCATION

DAMIAN MURCHAN AND GERRY SHIEL



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

SAGE Publications Ltd
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

SAGE Publications Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Editor: James Clark
Assistant editor: Robert Patterson
Production editor: Tom Bedford
Project manager: Jeanette Graham
Copyeditor: Sharon Cawood
Proofreader: Rosemary Campbell
Indexer: Anne Solamito
Marketing manager: Lorna Patkai
Cover design: Sheila Tong
Typeset by: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed in the UK

© Damian Murchan and Gerry Shiel 2017

First published 2017

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, or by any means, only with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside those terms should be sent to the publishers.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016954133

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library

ISBN 978-1-4739-1328-8
ISBN 978-1-4739-1329-5 (pbk)

At SAGE we take sustainability seriously. Most of our products are printed in the UK using FSC papers and boards. When we print overseas we ensure sustainable papers are used as measured by the PREPS grading system. We undertake an annual audit to monitor our sustainability.

Assessment in education

Learning contexts and professional standards

What you will learn in this chapter

This chapter sets the context for the work of teachers in class and links that work with student learning and with professional, legislative and societal expectations on schools and teachers. Schools are amongst the most complex organisations in society, tasked with ever-expanding expectations and obligations by parents, administrators and policy-makers. One key competency expected of teachers relates to student assessment. Teachers who do not grasp clearly the many purposes to which assessment is put and the array of approaches used in modern education systems are less prepared to contribute effectively to the collaborative education ventures that are designed to serve both individual students and broader society.

In this chapter, you will learn about the purposes of assessment, purposes for teachers and students and other purposes that are legitimately expected by stakeholders who are outside school but who are central to the education process. The chapter, and indeed the book overall, emphasise the diversity of assessment purposes. There are many stakeholders at different levels of remove from your work in class. Students, parents, colleagues and school management are in close proximity to your work. Teachers in schools where your students might transfer have an interest also, as do policy-makers who develop curriculum, assessments and codes of practice for teachers. Governments, representing taxpayers and responsible for anticipating future national needs, require information and assurance about the effectiveness of the system. Your work needs to be set and understood not only in the context of your class but also within broader systems and professional contexts. We conceptualise this plurality of information, needs and actions within two key themes that are reinforced throughout the book: (i) using information from assessments to evaluate and plan learning at student, class, school and system levels; and (ii) engaging with assessment as a collaborative process. We identify eight key principles that should inform educators' thinking and practice in relation to assessment.

2 Understanding and applying assessment in education

When you finish the chapter, you should be able to answer these questions:

- For what purposes are assessments used?
- Which individuals and agencies have an interest in information about student learning?
- What are teachers expected to know and be able to do in relation to student assessment?
- How should assessment inform your educational practice?

Role of assessment in teaching and learning

A comprehensive review of current assessment policies and practices across 21 national education systems (Sargent et al., 2013) highlights the following overarching trends:

- centralised or statutory curriculum frameworks, sometimes including specific attainment targets to be reached at specific levels/grades of education
- emphasis on both key subject areas (language, mathematics, science) and cross-curricular skills
- promotion of continuous, teacher-led and diagnostic/formative assessment
- national standardised assessment of students during compulsory education, either of all students in a cohort or of samples of students
- formal certification at the end of lower- and upper-secondary phases, frequently by national or designated agencies.

We can add a few other trends and implications. The policy drive aimed at embedding strategies in curricula to enhance students' cross-curricular skills, such as creativity, collaboration and problem solving, is quite a bit ahead of large-scale practical means to assess such traits. At secondary level, the move towards teacher involvement in formal certification is seen as one solution. There is likely to be an even greater use of assessment information as one of many sources of data in judging educational quality and justifying policies and expenditure. Finally, as assessment systems become more complex we are likely to see further ceding of responsibility for administrative and technical aspects of assessment by education ministries to specialised agencies and the commercial or non-profit sectors. These trends suggest a corresponding complexity for teachers in understanding and working within such systems.

There is no one role for assessment in education. Rather, assessment provides information that can be used by different people for different purposes. Many people have an interest in the work of schools and all may require information that suits their purpose. Teachers strive to promote student learning. This requires careful planning and implementation, often in relation to statutory curricular guidance. The use of assessment is an intrinsic part of this teaching and learning environment. A fundamental role for assessment, therefore, lies right within the classroom, close to teaching and learning. Teachers need to monitor how well students are learning, the successes they are experiencing and the difficulties being encountered by them. Only when teachers are aware of the learning profile and trajectory of students, can they really help them succeed.

Traditional concepts of assessment emphasised periodic ‘checking’ of how students were doing, commonly understood as assessment *of* learning. One practical problem with this is that students may struggle for some time and have difficulty in catching up on any concepts missed. Contemporary approaches to assessment stress more frequent assessments embedded in normal classroom practice, allowing teachers and students to monitor learning in real time and take corrective action as part of normal daily classroom routines. This assessment *for* learning assumes a central place for teachers in planning for, and using, assessments as a comprehensive and continuing component of sound teaching.

It is not only teachers who need to know how students are doing. Students themselves need accurate information about their progress so that they can understand and adjust their learning. Theories of motivation, self-regulation and attribution, discussed later in Chapter 4, highlight the centrality of learners to their own learning. Students who are highly motivated and who are aware of how they learn are more likely to succeed (Wiliam, 2011). Therefore, equipping students with the skills to monitor and adjust their own learning is a worthy educational goal. Providing students with such self-awareness can place the potential and responsibility for learning on students and encourage them to make the necessary effort. This is a potentially powerful role for assessment in education and one that is best managed and mediated through the teacher in class.

Whereas teachers traditionally enjoyed considerable autonomy in relation to the content and skills taught in class, recent curriculum development internationally has led to greater emphasis on more tightly prescribed statutory curricula. In England and Wales, for example, teachers and schools were relatively free to develop their own teaching programmes until the introduction of the national curriculum arising from the Education Reform Act of 1988. That move towards centrally developed statutory curricula and guidance is mirrored by developments in other systems worldwide, for example in Switzerland, a country with a long tradition of political and educational autonomy at the individual canton level (Sargent et al., 2013). Associated with centralised curricula is a greater specification of how students’ work and learning should be monitored and evaluated. This focus has evolved over time, more recently emphasising the formative use of assessment to help both teachers and students continually reshape and improve learning.

Paul Newton (2007) identified at least 18 purposes to which assessment might be put. Of these, perhaps only four or five involve the teacher directly in a day-to-day capacity. Although a small proportion of assessment functions, teacher purposes are nonetheless critically important: identifying learning needs, diagnosing learning difficulties, monitoring progress over time, and aiding the transfer and placement of students in classes and schools. The next section reviews in more depth the increasingly diverse needs for information on student learning.

Wider stakeholder needs for information on student learning

Teachers and students themselves are the most immediate and direct recipients of information about student learning. Parents also have an obvious need for information

4 Understanding and applying assessment in education

and thus schools and teachers frequently share data with parents, as discussed later in Chapters 8 and 9. Yet there are many other stakeholders who have an interest in information about the learning and progress of individual students and cohorts of students in schools. It is important that teachers recognise other stakeholders' needs and ensure that these needs are met where appropriate. Table 1.1 highlights four broad categories of assessment purpose, identifying a range of stakeholders within and across categories.

Table 1.1 Stakeholders with an interest in assessment outcomes

Support Learning	Quality Assurance	Policy Development	Selection and Other
Teachers	School management	Policy-makers	College admissions
Students	Local authorities	Public representatives	Employers
Parents	Inspectorate	Researchers	Assessment and test developers
Peers	Policy-makers		Publishers
Support services (psychological, speech and language)	Public Taxpayers		Media

Source: adapted from Newton (2007)

Many of these needs are obvious, as with those directly associated with supporting learning at class and school level. Other needs exist at levels more removed from the classroom: aggregate-level data might be used, for example, by local authorities to consider resource allocation across schools; or inspectors might wish to consider trends over time in the same school. Similarly, policy-makers such as ministry officials frequently require data to justify existing budgets, argue for more funding or evaluate curricula. Admissions officers use students' results in secondary education to help select and allocate students to third-level courses. Similarly, employers draw on students' assessment outcomes as part of recruitment processes. Although teachers individually in class may sometimes not fully see their part in the overall educational endeavour, the scale of educational expenditure means that politicians, the media and the wider public have considerable interest in outcomes also. This is not surprising given estimates of annual contributions to economies by educational activity: US\$2 trillion worldwide, £28 billion in the UK and €900 million in Ireland (Lynch et al., 2012). Spending on education institutions averaged 5.3% of Gross Domestic Product across OECD countries (OECD, 2015a), over 6% in the UK and 5.6% in the Republic of Ireland. This suggests a very significant investment by government, other agencies and individual students and families in education. Little wonder then that there is interest in how well the system and the schools within it are performing. Some of this interest, especially from the perspective of policy-makers, has given rise to the establishment of accountability mechanisms in many countries; some in the form of league tables of schools, despite criticisms of such approaches.

Assessment purposes for different contexts

Notwithstanding the diversity of stakeholders interested in information about student progress, the most common uses to which assessment is put can be narrowed down

to just two: promoting learning and finding out what students have learned. As a teacher, you will routinely monitor how students are doing in class and adjust your goals, instructional approach, resources or expectations accordingly. Traditionally, three purposes for assessment are identified in classroom and school settings: formative, diagnostic and summative. Assessments that serve formative purposes are implemented while teaching is under way, during lessons or during particular units of work. The key consideration is that the assessment takes place during instruction or an instructional phase and that the information yielded is used to help students learn. (Further detail is provided in Chapters 4 and 5.) Sometimes, teachers encounter student responses to formative assessments that do not immediately suggest how best to proceed. In such cases, the use of diagnostic assessment may be appropriate. Diagnostic assessment can help identify specific difficulties that students encounter, often in relation to language and mathematics. Diagnostic tests are generally developed by commercial or research agencies and frequently administered by specialist support teachers.

Assessments can also have a summative purpose in summing up students' achievement at a particular point in time, for example at the end of a unit of work or of a term, or at the conclusion of a point in schooling such as the end of compulsory education. Summative assessments can be designed by teachers or by external agencies and usually focus on summarising students' achievement across a wide range of learning. Examples of externally developed summative assessments in Britain and Ireland include assessments for GCSE, A Levels, Scottish National Qualifications and the Irish Leaving Certificate. In your teaching, you will need to become confident and proficient in developing, selecting and using assessments for summative purposes.

As highlighted in the previous section, educational planners and policy-makers require information about the progress of students in school. Patterns of grades from public examinations and qualifications such as GCSE (England, Wales, Northern Ireland) and Junior Certificate (Republic of Ireland) offer some limited information, focused on very particular points in schooling. Student achievement data are sometimes gathered at system level throughout the school years on a census basis, whereby all students are assessed. Examples are the SATs in reading, grammar and mathematics at KS2 in England and the Foundation Skills Assessment of students in Grades 4 and 7 in British Columbia. These approaches are not without their critics, many of whom highlight a tendency amongst some teachers to 'teach to the test', focusing significant amounts of class time on the type of content and skills that are contained in the tests. Alternative approaches to system monitoring involve sampling surveys such as the National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics in Ireland (2nd and 6th Class) and the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement in New Zealand (Years 4 and 8). It is likely that at some stage in your career, you will be asked to cooperate with such a national sampling survey.

Finally, an extension of national system monitoring is international surveys or studies of student achievement, typically administered in first language, mathematics and science. The Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) aimed at 15-year-old students and now involving over 70 education systems is discussed in detail, along with other international studies, in Chapter 3. Most international surveys go beyond the mere testing of students and also gather survey/observational data from policy-makers, curriculum developers, school principals, teachers, students and

6 Understanding and applying assessment in education

parents to form a more holistic picture of the educational inputs and processes that might shape outputs such as student achievement. Results are used to inform policy development in individual countries. PISA results in 2009, for example, prompted significant proposed policy change in the assessment of students at the end of the Junior Cycle in Ireland. In Wales, students performed below the OECD and UK average in all three areas tested in 2012, prompting the education secretary to declare that ‘PISA results were not good enough. The 2012 results confirm my view and that of my predecessor that standards in Wales are not high enough and must improve’ (Lewis, 2012: n.p.), comments more or less echoed in relation to results in Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Executive, 2013). As with national surveys, it is likely that both you and the students in your classes will be asked to participate in such surveys by completing tests, questionnaires or other inputs.

Join the debate: What is the main purpose of assessment in education?

Use your library’s online journal service to access the article by Paul Newton (2007) listed in the further reading at the end of this chapter. Review Table 1 in Newton’s article. With a colleague, identify those categories of educational assessment purposes that relate most centrally to the role you expect to play as a teacher. From the remaining uses, identify two or three that also seem to be very important in the context of education generally outside of your own teaching.

Legislation and professional codes of practice

The latter part of the 20th century saw increased state regulation and control over all aspects of education. In many education systems, national or regional legislation regulates curriculum development and implementation, teacher education, access to education and the activities of the teaching profession itself. In the Republic of Ireland between 1998 and 2005, eight legislative instruments were enacted that had significant relevance to educational assessment. Some of these have, in effect, codified in law what was implicit in custom and practice anyway. For example, section 22[b] of the 1998 Education Act requires teachers to ‘evaluate students and periodically report the results to students and parents’, classroom assessment that was already common practice, though not without its shortcomings (O’Leary, 2006). The Education Reform Act of 1988 in England and Wales brought perhaps more observable change to the system in the UK and has been followed by a raft of additional legislation. For example, the School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (DfE, 2012) prescribes specific assessment information to be provided on the websites of maintained schools in England. Further regulation by education ministries or allied agencies draws on legislative provision. Examples in Ireland include the guidelines for *Assessment in the primary school curriculum* (NCCA, 2007a) and the requirement that all primary schools must report students’ progress to parents at least twice a year (DES, 2011a).

As seen above, legal obligations provide one context for teachers' engagement with assessment. Another influential factor is standards established by statutory and other professional organisations that regulate teachers and their work. An analysis of teacher professional standards in five education systems reveals a common core of standards evident to a greater or lesser degree across all systems, as summarised in Table 1.2. The Irish, English and Scottish standards apply to all or the majority of teachers in the education system. The Australian and US standards, though not binding on all states or teachers, represent professional codes that have considerable support and influence nationally. All codes include criteria relevant to teachers' knowledge and expertise in relation to assessment.

Table 1.2 Common elements of expected professional standards for teachers: general

Personal integrity	Planning for teaching
Professional integrity	Management of learning
Care and respect for students	Knowledge and use of assessment
Ethical practice	Inclusion and differentiation
Awareness of system needs	Working collegially with others
Content knowledge	Engaging with CPD
Pedagogical knowledge and skills	Being a reflective practitioner

Sources: Ireland, Teaching Council (2016); England, DfE (2011a); Scotland, GTC for Scotland (2012); Australia, AITSL (2014); USA, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1989)

In some of the general professional standards, the specific nature of assessment-related knowledge and skills to be demonstrated by teachers is clearly identified. For example, seven general standards are highlighted in Australia. Standard 5, *Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning*, consists of five separate focus areas: assess student learning; provide feedback; make consistent and comparable judgements; interpret student data; and report on student achievement. In Scotland, two detailed sections within the General Teaching Council standards for registration focus on assessment.

A number of agencies within and across countries have published standards for educational assessment. These standards are generally understood and accepted by professional organisations and professionals as important and relevant. The *Standards for teacher competence in educational assessment of students* (AFT et al., 1990) focus especially on teachers' needs and responsibilities in relation to assessment (see Table 1.3). A revision suggested by Brookhart (2011) added further emphasis on incorporating formative assessment into teachers' practice and working effectively within the accountability and standards-based reform culture prevalent in the USA. Amongst the eight *Teachers' Standards* (Teaching) in England, Standard 6 identifies four specific assessment competencies expected of teachers (see Table 1.3), while, in Ireland, specific guidelines for schools in relation to assessment in primary education assume a number of key teacher competencies.

Although the standards in Table 1.3 are directed mainly at teachers, other more generic standards have been developed which are designed to guide overall practice by education ministries, test publishers and users of assessment. The *European*

8 Understanding and applying assessment in education

Table 1.3 Expected professional standards for teachers: assessment

USA: Teacher competency ¹	England: Teachers' standards ²	Ireland: School guidelines ³
<p>Teachers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose assessment methods • Develop assessment methods • Administer, score and interpret the results of externally and internally produced assessments • Use assessment results to make decisions about students, teaching, curriculum and school improvement • Develop sound grading procedures • Communicate assessment results to students and others • Recognise unethical and inappropriate uses of assessment 	<p>Teachers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to assess in curriculum areas, including statutory assessment requirements • Make use of formative and summative assessment • Use data to monitor progress, set targets and plan lessons • Give pupils regular feedback and encourage them to respond to the feedback 	<p>Teachers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather, record, interpret, use and report assessment information in relation to both formative and summative purposes • Engage with assessment review and development at school level

Sources: 1. AFT et al. (1990); 2. DfE (2011a); 3. NCCA (2007a)

framework of standards for educational assessment 1.0 (AEA–Europe, 2012) is designed to ensure that practices in educational assessment are transparent across European education systems and that practices can be judged against agreed quality criteria. Core elements of assessment included in the framework include:

1. Assessment goals, use of results and target population
2. Bases of evidence to indicate student attainment of assessment goals
3. Processes and practicalities of conducting assessments
4. Processes and accuracy of scoring/rating
5. Taking decisions on the basis of scores
6. Reporting results to relevant stakeholders
7. Reviewing assessment quality and its fit with intended purpose

In the USA, the *Standards for educational and psychological testing* (AERA et al., 2014) is the latest edition in a series of standards published jointly by the three influential professional organisations since 1966. Like the European Framework, the US Standards aim to establish expected norms of good practice in assessment and provide criteria for evaluating the quality of practice. The standards are aimed primarily at test developers and users of assessment.

Assessment themes and principles

As suggested in the sections above, understanding and embracing the diverse role of the teacher requires sophisticated knowledge, skills, competencies and personal professional attributes. Assessment systems, and teachers' capacity to engage with them, need to be framed around some coherent themes. As one important dimension of professional practice, teachers need to use information from assessments to evaluate and plan learning experiences for students. Whether the assessment is at the micro level of in-class informal monitoring of student

progress or at the macro level of national tests, the dual intent is fundamentally the same: evaluate and plan. When we consider the overall professional standards expected of teachers, the need for teachers to work collaboratively becomes apparent. Teachers can usefully collaborate with other teachers and other stakeholders in planning, teaching, assessing and reviewing their own and school and system performance.

Given the array of assessment instruments, approaches and advice available to teachers, it is easy to get caught up in issues of administration, recording and reporting without quite understanding the place of assessment in teaching and learning. Having a clear set of assessment principles to guide planning and practice helps bring coherence to teachers'- and systems-level practice. Over a number of years, the authors have been involved in supporting system-wide change in assessment in a number of countries. This involved providing support to policy-makers, school leaders, teachers and teacher educators, in addition to our sustained involvement in teacher education in Ireland, especially focused on assessment. The assessment principles highlighted below draw from that broad experience at the system and classroom levels to articulate principles that should inform the conceptualisation, development and enactment of assessment in practice.

Our assessment vision emphasises eight principles:

1. Society's conceptualisation of learning broadens as each generation develops deeper insight into the world around and within us. Assessment must strive to reflect, support and promote the plurality and inter-relatedness of learning. Central foci for assessment yesterday may not be as relevant for today's students who will work, learn and live tomorrow.
2. There are different purposes for assessment. Some purposes serve the direct information and decision-making needs of students and teachers. Additional purposes help other stakeholders to understand the learning of individual students and groups of students and the functioning of education at system levels.
3. Assessment cannot be detached from its primary function to support the growth and development of citizens and society. Whether for in-class formative purposes or for system-monitoring-improvement, assessment policies, procedures and practices must be framed ethically and implemented fairly.
4. The human mind, outlook, behaviour and condition represent a complex mosaic. Increasingly, education systems build and enact curricula designed to help learners develop and flourish across a range of attributes and dimensions. It is unrealistic to expect that one or even a small number of assessment approaches can adequately capture and reflect such complexity. Assessment approaches constantly evolve and will continue to change. Such diversity and change should be reflected in the multiple and different ways we assess learners.
5. One of the most obvious recent evolutions in teaching and learning concerns the use of digital technologies. The digital transformation evident in society and many classrooms should be reflected in a greater use of digital technology in assessment.
6. Most education systems cherish broad learning but also prioritise specific areas. Areas of special emphasis include literacy, numeracy and science. For policy-makers, school leaders, teachers and the public, there is a need to find appropriate balance in what and how we assess.

10 Understanding and applying assessment in education

7. Assessment involves the use of continually evolving approaches and tools. This requires informed, competent use so that assessment can provide information that is accurate, interpreted carefully and communicated appropriately.
8. Teaching, learning and education more broadly should be guided by evidence: evidence of what is happening, what is working, what is not working and how processes and experiences can be improved. Assessment offers information that can be interpreted and used in evidence-led practice and policy.

These eight principles underpin the successful use of assessment within education systems, schools and classrooms. There is a particular onus on the teacher to reach an appropriate standard of knowledge and competency so that assessment can be used judiciously. What the principles emphasise also, however, is that technical competency is not sufficient. Professionalism involves careful judgement and the fair, ethical use of approaches that serve the intended purpose, while retaining a focus on the needs and rights of the parties involved, most notably learners.

Situating these principles within broader educational structures and processes is summarised in Figure 1.1. The model highlights the associations between selected curriculum and assessment inputs and regulations, teacher standards and competencies, assessment principles and stakeholder needs.

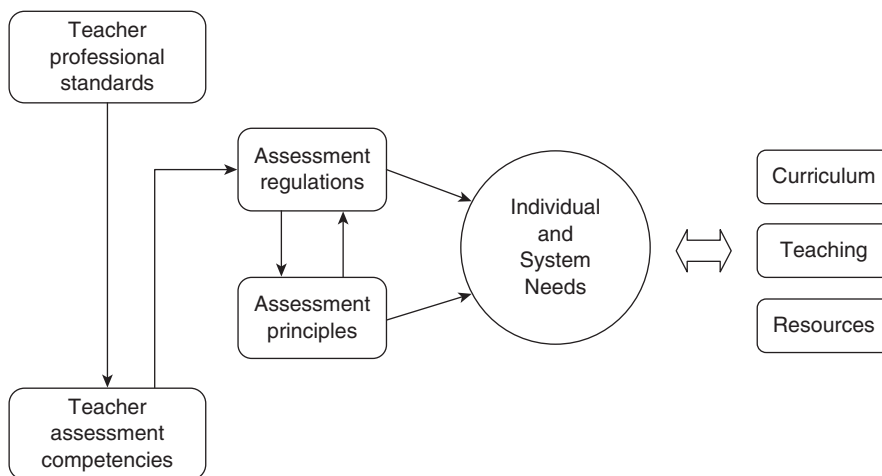


Figure 1.1 Systemic overview of teacher professional and assessment standards in context

Curriculum and assessment frameworks and regulations represent the essential requirement for teachers who use their professional judgement to structure appropriate opportunities for learners. In doing so, teachers draw on and demonstrate professional standards and competencies, responding to assessment regulations and expectations mediated by their understanding of assessment principles. Depending on the system or school within which you work, the curriculum and/or assessment policies and practice will be prescribed to varying

degrees, sometimes very tightly, sometimes with greater latitude left to the teacher. Regardless of this, it is up to teachers to use professional judgement in 'bringing' the curriculum to students and in how to monitor student learning. Assessment principles help ensure that system and teacher practices work coherently to serve agreed, fair purposes, with the teacher as mediator, exercising professional judgement.

Chapter summary

What will schools be like in 50 years' time? What will the experiences of teachers and students be like? Given the pace of change in the last two decades, it is difficult to offer reliable predictions. What we can probably say is that information will remain central, particularly information to facilitate learning and inform others about what is happening in schools. This chapter emphasised the central place of information and of stakeholders' needs in relation to education and assessment in particular. Later in the book, we will explore different interpretations of assessment: *for* learning, *of* learning and even *as* learning. Teachers need to acquire the appropriate competency in assessment in light of legislative and regulatory requirements and as part of their wider professional role and identity. Various people and agencies have a legitimate right to information yielded by assessments. If used appropriately and subject to sound principles of use, students, teachers, parents and wider society are all the better for the availability of this information. Teachers, with parents, are positioned closest to students throughout their education. But the important work under way in classrooms resonates in the local and wider environment. Little surprise, then, that many people have an interest in schools' work and seek information about the outcomes of that work. This book is predicated on the concept of multiple, complementary functions for assessment. The challenge for teachers is to acknowledge this and to shape and work with educational processes and structures for individual and societal good.

Questions for discussion

- 1 Identify any aspects of your assessment practice that are formally required of you as part of school or other regulations. Discuss with a colleague who it is that requires such action/information and why.
- 2 Access the most relevant set of professional standards governing your role/future role as a teacher. Which specific standards or elements of them relate to assessment? How do you rate yourself in relation to any assessment-related standards? Which aspects do you need to work on?
- 3 The psychologist Robert Ebel (1980) posed the question 'what are the consequences of not testing?' Identify a range of possible positive and negative impacts of not assessing students in the educational setting with which you are most directly involved.

Further reading

McCormack, O., Lynch, R., & Hennessy, J. (2015). Plastic people in pinstripe suits: an exploration of the views of Irish parents on the publication of school league tables. *Educational Studies*, 41 (5), 513–33.

One use of assessment results in a number of countries is the compilation of school performance or league tables, based on aggregated student test data. In Ireland, such practice is prohibited by legislation, though proxy estimates are used by some media organisations. McCormack and colleagues provide interesting and perhaps surprising insights into the views of Irish parents on the possible publication of school league tables.

Newton, P.E. (2007). Clarifying the purposes of educational assessment. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 14 (2), 149–70.

This article grapples with ambiguities in assessment terminology and meaning. Newton identifies three levels at which assessment purposes can be characterised: judgement level, decision level and impact level.