

01 **Chapter 1**  
02 **Framing Assessment Today for the Future:**  
03 **Issues and Challenges**  
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07 **Jacqueline Joy Cumming and Claire M. Wyatt-Smith**  
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13 Assessment—and its interface with curriculum, teaching and learning—has always  
14 been a significant component of classroom practice. Research has indicated that  
15 typical teachers spend between one-third and one-half of their class time engaged in  
16 one or another type of assessment or learning evaluation activity (Stiggins & Con-  
17 klin, 1992). However, research has also expressed concern that the knowledge that  
18 teachers hold about assessment matters has been limited, with scant attention paid to  
19 this area in teacher-preparation programs (Christie et al., 1991; Louden et al., 2005;  
20 Matters, 2006).

21 Over the past decade, the significance of the roles of assessment and account-  
22 ability in education has only increased. On the one hand, educators are developing  
23 ways to improve practical knowledge and application of assessment and develop-  
24 ment of assessment cultures among teachers through projects and policies such as  
25 Assessment for Learning (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003; Black  
26 & Wiliam, 2004; Harlen, 2005; Kellis & Silvernail, 2002; National Research Coun-  
27 cil, 2001). On the other hand, governments and policy makers around the world  
28 have strengthened the role of externally mandated and reported assessment for  
29 accountability purposes.

30 This book examines educational assessment research, policy and practice in the  
31 rapidly changing world of the 21st century. Assessment not only continues to be  
32 a key activity of teachers, but also has become a key focus of educational research  
33 throughout the world, with the field often represented as contested. While traditional  
34 issues of validity and reliability continue to have high salience, there are a myr-  
35 iad of issues that are also pressing for educational assessment on the international  
36 scene. These include assessment, the law and accountability; the value of testing  
37 for international benchmarking and public reporting; assessment practices that take  
38 account of cultural and social diversity; assessment practices that go beyond tradi-  
39 tional paper-and-pencil tests to include other modes; assessment and technological  
40 innovation; the matter of what counts as authentic assessment, especially in relation  
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44 J.J. Cumming (✉)  
45 Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

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01 to professional and vocational education; and assessment issues relating to inclusion  
02 and disability.

03 Two major factors have informed this book. First, the book has arisen as a result  
04 of the previously mentioned clear and growing pressure from various stakehold-  
05 ers for education accountability. This has been reflected in increased measurement  
06 initiatives, including the prominence given to large-scale testing and reporting initia-  
07 tives, and national introspection on outcomes from international comparative tests.  
08 Such measurement activities are not a stand-alone force, however, in the educa-  
09 tion and assessment fields. Also evident are strong moves in some countries to  
10 endorse alternative modes of assessment beyond traditional paper-and-pencil tests—  
11 the assessment mode limits usually required in large-scale testing—and to develop  
12 teachers' assessment capabilities in their daily classroom practice as well as to serve  
13 accountability purposes. These radically different directions in research inevitably  
14 make competing demands on education researchers, as well as those involved in pol-  
15 icy and practice. It is timely, therefore, for this book to bring together cutting-edge  
16 research and theoretical discussion from all perspectives and to open out and explore  
17 the ways forward for assessment in a new century characterised by an unprecedented  
18 change and growth in knowledge.

19 Thus, the second factor that informed the development of this book is our chosen  
20 approach. In previous research and publications, we have applied a multidisciplinary  
21 and multitheoretical approach in our work (Cumming & Wyatt-Smith, 2001). A  
22 multitheoretical approach to education research has also been advocated by oth-  
23 ers (for example, Beach, Green, Kamil, & Shanahan, 1991, and more recently,  
24 Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006). This book aims to be encompassing of differ-  
25 ent disciplines that inform the methodologies and approaches underlying different  
26 theoretical understandings about, and practices in, assessment.

27 The field of assessment research needs to move beyond tensions posited as dia-  
28 metrically opposed in ways that are unhelpful for improving practice or assisting  
29 the classroom practitioner. Notions of assessment for measurement and assessment  
30 for learning work, in part, to maintain a long-standing perceived disparity between  
31 objectivity and subjectivity. We consider it important to move forward. The field  
32 of assessment can now be characterised in terms of the myriad of 21st-century  
33 issues that confront it and that call for public and scholarly scrutiny and discus-  
34 sion. The authors in this book situate assessment in differing contexts, providing a  
35 research, policy and practice nexus for assessment in the 21st century, with impacts  
36 of changes, such as technology, inclusive practices, cultural diversity and learning  
37 for the workplace, as well as accountability-driven reform.

## 41 **What the Authors Were Asked to Do**

43 In order to shape this book and meet our commitment to readers to provide a mul-  
44 titheoretical and multidisciplinary approach to assessment, we asked our authors  
45 to provide chapters with a difference. Each chapter, and its respective author/s,

01 frames its own space and presents a distinctive ‘voice’ in the book. While in our  
02 initial framing we envisaged the dimensions of assessment issues of interest for  
03 the 21<sup>st</sup> century and identified potential authors with expertise in each dimension,  
04 the authors were free to amend our suggested topic or to offer alternative topics  
05 of interest to them. We knew that the standing of each of our authors in their field  
06 would ensure interesting and provocative commentary for our readers. However,  
07 each chapter becomes a self-contained exposition on assessment. We did not just ask  
08 authors to contribute in their areas of special interest, but we also asked authors to  
09 provide brief overviews to inform the reader about the theoretical and methodological  
10 frameworks underpinning their writing. This is contained within each chapter  
11 itself in some writings, or as an appendix in others. Further, our authors were asked  
12 to provide their own definitions for key terms and concepts in their chapters, again  
13 either within the chapters or in an attached glossary. Thus, throughout this book  
14 you may find definitions of terms across a range of chapters that may or may not be  
15 congruent. We consider these contextual definitions of assessment concepts valuable  
16 in demonstrating the social and cultural meanings we bring to bear on our research  
17 work. In this book, particular theories are not prioritised and meanings are not singular  
18 in direction. Thus, we hope the book is informative for readers, not only for  
19 the breadth of discussion on assessment issues for the 21st century, but also for the  
20 demonstration of different ways of knowing, learning and ‘doing’ assessment.

21 In the next part of this chapter, we provide an overview of the contents of the  
22 book as a guide to you as the reader. We highlight the main focuses of the authors  
23 and synthesise very briefly the many complex and exciting ideas embedded in each  
24 chapter. We endeavour to provide some sense of orientation of the authors in each  
25 chapter, but leave to you a fulsome engagement with, and examination of, the theoretical  
26 and methodological framings of each. We also leave to your own discovery  
27 the excitement and depth of the insights of the authors and their conclusions for  
28 future directions.

### 31 **The Contributions of the Authors**

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34 First, we express our thanks to Patricia Broadfoot for providing the Preface to this  
35 book. Broadfoot provides a historical and sociocultural overview of assessment that  
36 serves as a constant—dare we say—‘benchmark’ for the practices we see around  
37 us in education today. We understand that in strongly competitive societies in the  
38 past, examinations were used to stratify social class and opportunity. What is harder  
39 to understand in a world in which equitable opportunity and education for all are  
40 the espoused goals of our nations, we appear to perpetuate systems that promote  
41 competition, failure and success, especially when such success appears, in part at  
42 least, to reflect the social capital of the student. Broadfoot examines the various  
43 roles for assessment in our 21<sup>st</sup>-century world, defining four dimensions that we  
44 should consider to compare the present with the past: ‘purpose, mode, content and  
45 organisation’ (see page x). She reminds us that in our post-modern construction

01 of assessment at the beginning of the 21st century, we are having doubts about  
02 the perfection of science as a measure of student learning. The direction for the  
03 new century is for more ‘humanist’ and individualised focuses on assessment and  
04 student-learning enhancement. New directions will need to consider the diversity  
05 of learners and learning, of what is to be learned and how it can be demonstrated.  
06 Broadfoot posits a new scenario of portfolios, transportability and tailored assess-  
07 ment. We believe that the considerations of our authors provide the means to move  
08 us forward in the pursuit of a new paradigm for assessment for the remainder of the  
09 21<sup>st</sup> century.

10 The chapters in this book have been characterised under three main groupings,  
11 although this is not to imply similarity or singularity of thoughts within the chapters.  
12 However, as the authors’ perspectives emerged, we identified three major concerns.  
13 The first four chapters—by Gunther Kress; Randy Bennett and Drew Gitomer;  
14 Glenn Finger and Romina Jamieson-Proctor; and Claire Wyatt-Smith and Stephanie  
15 Gunn—explore the new dimensions for assessment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that are  
16 having or will have an impact on assessment. These include the impacts of glob-  
17 alisation, new technologies and new understandings of the role and significance of  
18 frameworks and communication in enactments of educational assessment. We char-  
19 acterise these chapters as dealing with issues of creativity, innovation, new skills  
20 and capabilities and changing communication practices.

21 Gunther Kress starts his discussion with the proposition that ‘dealing with learn-  
22 ing and assessment invokes theories of communication and meaning’ (see page x).  
23 He challenges readers to consider how to recognise learning and the data or evidence  
24 that would count, showing that learning has occurred. Through his probing of these  
25 two issues, Kress focuses on the notions of learning in specific contexts and how the  
26 making of meaning, sign and concept relate to context.

27 Working from the perspective of a semiotic theory of learning, Kress presents  
28 the case for new principles of recognition of learning that challenge the traditional  
29 dominance of the linguistic modes of speech and writing. His chapter calls into  
30 question how these modes have been given pre-eminence and provokes a conscious  
31 attempt at recognising meaning-making and learning in all modes. The powerful  
32 message from Kress is that ‘what is not recognised will not and cannot be assessed’,  
33 leading to what he refers to as ‘severe misrecognition of learners’ capacities and  
34 actions’ (see page x).

35 Any discussion of assessment for the future must necessarily encompass the  
36 issue of technology. The relationship between technology and assessment can  
37 have many forms: technology as a tool to undertake traditional forms of assess-  
38 ment; the interplay of the impact of technology on assessment; assessment of  
39 technology in education; and new views as to how assessment is shaped when  
40 technology is assumed as a 21st-century focus. Randy Bennett and Drew Gitomer  
41 provide an exhilarating perspective of the way in which assessment should be con-  
42 strued in a technologically driven world—the world that is already around us in  
43 the 21st century. Bennett and Gitomer link technological advances to advances  
44 in understanding individuals and the nature of learning. They challenge current  
45 accountability agendas to be more informed and informing. Their challenge involves

01 the incorporation of cognitive science developments, developments in psychometric  
02 measurement approaches and technological developments that allow presentation of  
03 'richer assessment tasks' with some automation of 'scoring' (see page x). Bennett  
04 and Gitomer commence by contextualising their thoughts in the United States' edu-  
05 cational context, concerns about quality and equality of educational experiences for  
06 all students and the limited educational value of consequent accountability agen-  
07 das for student improvement. However, as we note for other chapters, the United  
08 States' experiences and policy preoccupations, rightly or wrongly, are not theirs  
09 alone. Bennett and Gitomer challenge themselves to create a better accountability  
10 system that is modern, informed by good assessment practices and educationally  
11 of value, allowing monitoring of student progress to inform and enhance student  
12 learning. Their proposed solution encompasses the themes that emerged indepen-  
13 dently from so many of our authors—concerns that assessment should be able to  
14 identify individual strengths and weaknesses with customised reports for different  
15 audiences, should be based in some theory of learning and development, should  
16 provide authentic and meaningful engagement for students, should recognise the  
17 social and cultural nature of learning and knowledge and should be supported by  
18 professional development and assessment-cued teachers. It is in the final enactment  
19 of their solution that technology becomes a central support.

20 Glenn Finger and Romina Jamieson-Proctor also examine assessment through  
21 the lens of technology—not just the application of technology as a form of assess-  
22 ment, but also the issues relating to assessment of learning in the area of information  
23 and communications technologies (ICTs), the interaction of assessment forms and  
24 the nature of ICT knowledge. Agreeing with Bennett and Gitomer, and Finger and  
25 Jamieson-Proctor, we take as given that technology and technological developments  
26 will be major influences on the directions that education and assessment will take in  
27 the 21st century. If they are not, then the outcome will be an education of students  
28 constructed by adults that is an anachronism in the modern world. The technological  
29 changes to come cannot be envisaged, just as the technological resources available  
30 to children at this time are beyond the dreams of the mid-20th century. However,  
31 understanding the nature of knowledge in ICT contexts and the import for teach-  
32 ing, learning and assessment are relatively new educational endeavours. Finger and  
33 Jamieson-Proctor explore this issue for teachers from the perspective of TPCK—  
34 technology pedagogical content knowledge—building on the pedagogical theories  
35 of Shulman (1987). They provide examples of ICT use for assessment, such as  
36 development of ePortfolios for students. As this chapter demonstrates, the opportu-  
37 nities are limited only by our own capacity to engage with the technologies afforded.  
38 Finger and Jamieson-Proctor argue that it is important for assessment schema to go  
39 beyond a focus on the knowledge that students have of technologies to 'how students  
40 are able to use ICT for learning in a range of curriculum contexts' and how such use  
41 facilitates the 'development of creative, complex and critical thinking' (page x).  
42 Finger and Jamieson-Proctor provide a comprehensive examination of the current  
43 state of the art in learning with, and assessment of, ICT and the many tools already  
44 available to teachers and emerging innovations. Most importantly, they identify that  
45 the challenge for the future will be teachers maintaining ICT proficiency at the same

01 rate as students and the need for educators to have ‘a strong understanding of how  
02 students are learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (page x).

03 Claire Wyatt-Smith and Stephanie Gunn explore the need for theoretical  
04 underpinnings to assessment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, given the range of purposes and  
05 activities being implemented. They argue that an approach to assessment as  
06 ‘meaning-making’ (Delandshere & Petrosky, 1998) provides a way to examine and  
07 shape assessment purposes and practices. Wyatt-Smith and Gunn support their the-  
08 oretical propositions with empirical evidence collected during research conducted  
09 in Queensland, Australia. The assessment system of Queensland for accreditation  
10 in the senior years of schooling, using teacher judgment, has been internationally  
11 known for 30 years. Wyatt-Smith and Gunn explore enactments of such approaches  
12 in the earlier years of schooling and explore the ways in which such judgments  
13 are made: the dynamics between social contexts and teacher expectations in shap-  
14 ing judgments and the contexts of increasing external accountability demands and  
15 influence on classroom practices. While the discussion is set in Queensland and  
16 Australia, these contexts have clear international generalisability. Drawing on argu-  
17 ments about the import of these for issues of student equity and the need to address  
18 the diversity of students, Wyatt-Smith and Gunn emphasise the need for evidence as  
19 an underpinning essential element in assessment. However, such evidence itself is  
20 part of the sociocultural context of educational enactments. Wyatt-Smith and Gunn  
21 elaborate four ‘lenses’ to explore assessment as meaning-making, applying them as  
22 a framework to explore the empirical evidence from their research. As the explo-  
23 ration unfolds, implications not only for assessment theory and practice but also for  
24 teacher professionalism and assessment cultures emerge. This chapter shows that  
25 as we have moved into the 21st century with enhanced expectations of the role of  
26 assessment to improve learning, we need to move further with our expectations of  
27 our own understandings of the theory of assessment itself.

28 Another broad theme identified by the authors in this book was the consider-  
29 ation of a range of assessment issues we characterise as ‘Building social capital:  
30 Difference, diversity and social inclusion’. An underlying theme in these chapters,  
31 by Caroline Gipps and Gordon Stobart, Susan Brookhart, Deb Keen and Michael  
32 Arthur-Kelly, and Joy Cumming, is the effect of assessment on students’ demon-  
33 stration of achievement and the interaction of assessment and student. Again, these  
34 concerns have been examined from a range of perspectives: equity issues for indi-  
35 vidual students in the pursuit of best educational opportunities for all; equity issues  
36 through the examination of available national and international standardised test  
37 data; equity issues and new ways of enhancing assessment practices with students  
38 with disabilities; and assessment and equity issues as they emerge from law.

39 Caroline Gipps and Gordon Stobart address the issue of fairness in assessment,  
40 moving from technical definitions of ‘fairness’ to conceptions of fairness that con-  
41 sider the contexts of assessment and social and cultural issues—assessment as a  
42 ‘socially embedded activity’. Most broadly, they argue that fairness needs to con-  
43 sider access and opportunity, not just equality of scores or achievement outcomes.  
44 Equal outcomes may be fair to one group of students but not to another, and unequal  
45 outcomes may be ‘fair and just’ for all (see page x). Gipps and Stobart elaborate the

01 theme of the origins of assessment discussed by Broadfoot in the 'Preface', the  
02 emergence of assessment in society for selection purposes, within a framework at  
03 the time considered fair and promoting merit. The influence of these origins on  
04 assessment development and the emergence of the psychometric paradigm through  
05 the 20th century are considered in parallel with the social assumptions that under-  
06 pin these developments and the social capital that enables performance. While the  
07 development of the 'assessment' paradigm was seen as an educational response to  
08 the measurement paradigm development of the 20th century, in itself this devel-  
09 opment is not socially or culturally neutral. Gipps and Stobart posit that fairness  
10 from a sociocultural perspective can only be achieved through new constructions  
11 of validity. Through three examples from different social, cultural and assessment  
12 contexts, the authors demonstrate that fairness and equity cannot be assumed, but  
13 must be carefully monitored in any assessment environment. Most importantly, they  
14 see the pursuit of fairness in assessment, and opportunity for the individual, as a  
15 major and ongoing challenge for educational assessment. We need to continue to  
16 make apparent biases and assumptions and to maintain vigilance and the 'political  
17 will' if we value a goal of fairness for all.

18 Susan Brookhart provides a comprehensive analysis of international and national  
19 assessment data and research study outcomes across many dimensions to examine  
20 assessment equity and gender effects. Necessarily, her analyses are based on the  
21 standardised measures used in, and outcomes from, such studies, with the types  
22 of standardised assessments ranging from multiple-choice formats to extended per-  
23 formance assessments. She investigates findings for a range of curricula, including  
24 English, mathematics and science, and for different student age groups. However,  
25 Brookhart's discussion is not just to identify whether different achievement out-  
26 comes can be related to the gender of a student, but also to examine the nature  
27 of any differences, whether differences are due to an interaction between the gen-  
28 der of a student and an assessment process (the answer appears to be 'no') and  
29 how any such differences are interpreted by educators. Her concern is with what  
30 students can do and the pedagogical implications for differences demonstrated by  
31 achievement studies. Brookhart's initial analyses show that while consistent effects  
32 are found for reading, favouring girls over boys, the effects for mathematics are  
33 less clear and consistent and are likely to be curriculum and pedagogy related.  
34 Somewhat similar outcomes are found for other areas, particularly when results are  
35 analysed in conjunction with other demographic data. There appears to be a clear  
36 interaction between the construct being assessed, the groups of students and gender  
37 outcomes. Brookhart notes that where differences are found, individual variation can  
38 be more significant: 'individual boys and girls, and individual schools, may be very  
39 different from the average' (page x). Her concluding discussion regarding future  
40 directions to ensure equity in assessment considers the importance of individual  
41 items. However, her final thoughts and recommendations offer a different challenge  
42 to assessment research, calling for more understanding of 'economic and cultural  
43 patterns in achievement, which may be more amenable to change' (page x).

44 Deborah Keen and Michael Arthur-Kelly consider the implications of assessment  
45 for students who have always had specific attention in education research: students

01 with disability. However, their discussion shifts the discourse from a deficit model  
02 of limited expectations for these students to an empowering model in order to chart  
03 progress through acts of assessment tied closely and intrinsically to instruction and  
04 goal setting. Such assessment is occurring in a context in which change is ‘incre-  
05 mental’, but where identification of effective and ineffective instruction and the level  
06 of intensity of instruction needed for each individual student are critical. Keen and  
07 Arthur-Kelly continue the theme of our work that all individuals are able to learn and  
08 are entitled to learning opportunities. Their focus on student engagement with learn-  
09 ing, and ways to assess such engagement, brings a new dimension to considerations  
10 of assessment theory from mainstream perspectives. Keen and Arthur-Kelly sup-  
11 port their argument by drawing on empirical data from research with students with  
12 autistic spectrum disorder. They describe curriculum-based assessment for students  
13 with disability, drawing on research originating in the United States. They state  
14 that ‘[i]t is now generally agreed that assessment and intervention are best focused  
15 on maximising the individual learning outcomes achieved by the student, from a  
16 strengths perspective’ (page x). Keen and Arthur-Kelly pose ‘big’ questions in their  
17 assessment profiles, including the ‘best support’ for students and life-long learning,  
18 with goals including ‘curiosity, increased independence... and self-actualisation’  
19 (page x) and the intensive curriculum planning necessary to work with students with  
20 disability. Their chapter provides positive and challenging directions for the educa-  
21 tion and assessment of students with disability. We ponder whether their principles  
22 apply only to students with disability or whether they represent ideal frameworks  
23 for the education of all students.

24 In the final chapter in this section of the book, examining issues of fairness,  
25 cultural diversity and social capital, Joy Cumming explores assessment issues from  
26 the perspective of education law. Education law, including legal challenges relating  
27 to assessment, is already a major area of study in the United States, but is only  
28 emerging in case law in England and is relatively limited in Australia and many other  
29 nations. However, individual students, teachers and parents have a growing expecta-  
30 tion of their rights and empowerment as individuals, whether or not such rights are  
31 indeed present in a nation’s laws. When administrative recourse to right-perceived  
32 wrongs fails, people are turning to the courts for justice. In this chapter, Cumming  
33 examines the status of legal challenges in assessments, the frameworks in which  
34 such challenges can occur and the burdens that must be met by those who feel they  
35 are wronged—the plaintiffs—in order to succeed in court. The area of education law  
36 is not recognised in its own right in the law courts, and challenges must be won or  
37 lost within the fields that have emerged from other contexts such as administration  
38 law, discrimination law or negligence law. Cumming’s analysis shows that the con-  
39 struction of equity in law for an individual is not necessarily of the same meaning  
40 that educators would ascribe. Indeed, the courts may be perceived as harsh in their  
41 resolution of educational matters that clearly have had considerable negative impact  
42 on the lives and opportunities of individuals. Nevertheless, cases raising a range of  
43 assessment matters have been successful, and precedents for much broader future  
44 actions around educational assessment matters have been established through key  
45 cases in England, such as Phelps (2001). Cumming considers the assessment areas



01 where educators need to take care, to reduce the likelihood of litigation and the sub-  
02 sequent distribution of resources to the legal community, rather than to educational  
03 provision.

04 Our final characterisation of the chapters in this book reflects the impact of spe-  
05 cific contexts on assessment outcomes, whether drawing on geographical, political,  
06 paradigmatic or policy frameworks.

07 Patrick Griffin has explored the ways in which schools and teachers can use the  
08 array of standardised test data available in Australia, and in schools in other nations,  
09 for formative purposes to reform teaching and enhance student learning. Drawing  
10 on psychometric models of assessment, including item–response modelling, Griffin  
11 follows the work developed at the Australian Council for Educational Research<sup>1</sup> in  
12 the use of developmental scales to identify the quality and developmental progress  
13 of a student’s achievement against the item demands and constructs of such tests.  
14 Griffin notes that a developmental approach in interpreting data allows teachers to  
15 scaffold learning for individual students and to create ‘personalised and clinical  
16 approaches to intervention’ (page x). When standardised tests are developed using  
17 a criterion-referenced approach, the developmental scales and student performance  
18 against criteria can be identified. In his chapter, Griffin provides guidelines on ways  
19 that teachers can map content and examine student performance and progress. He  
20 explores the resources that teachers need in order to undertake intervention and  
21 plan future instruction with individual students, suggesting enhanced communi-  
22 cation among teachers as an active form of professional development. Griffin’s  
23 chapter includes description of a successful school enactment of the principles that  
24 he proposes. He concludes by considering the import of his arguments, not only for  
25 teacher professional development but also for teacher education. Griffin’s chapter  
26 commences with a focus on individualised use of student assessment data for forma-  
27 tive purposes to improve learning, but progresses to a systemic examination of the  
28 use of data for change and pedagogical enhancement. Given the maintained focus of  
29 governments on educational accountability, it is likely that systemic assessment data  
30 will continue to grow in Australia and elsewhere. It, therefore, is sensible to explore  
31 how this can be used most effectively for the purposes for which it was intended.

32 Gabrielle Matters also examines the way that teachers, and schools, can use a  
33 range of assessment data to improve instruction and student learning. Her focus, in  
34 the main, is similar to that of Griffin: the standardised-test information available to  
35 schools from external accountability regimes. However, Matters argues that consid-  
36 erable detailed information is available to schools and teachers within such school  
37 data and suggests ways in which the interaction between students and assessments  
38 should be scrutinised to examine and improve student performance. She further  
39 argues that future developments of assessments should ensure that information at  
40 such a level is of a quality that it can serve these functions. One key to quality  
41 for Matters is the care taken in the identification of the construct, the ‘conceptual

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44 <sup>1</sup> In 1992, the National Council for Measurement in Education gave ACER its Annual Award for  
45 ‘outstanding dissemination of educational measurement concepts to the public’ for this work.

01 framework' (page x) that is being assessed and against which student progress is  
02 being measured. She explores the value of each individual item within an assessment  
03 context, and indeed the interaction of the item and the individual student within  
04 the specific context. Drawing on a learning model incorporating 'presage-process-  
05 product', Matters posits that the individual student has as much a 'causally central  
06 role in the learning process' as teachers and schools, and hence in the assessment  
07 process (page x). Both Matters and Brookhart have noted that individuals have var-  
08 ied backgrounds and experiences and are the product of 'nature' and 'nurture'. As  
09 Wyatt-Smith and Gunn also noted, this source of difference, however, should not  
10 be used to justify or explain different outcomes or to remove responsibility from  
11 educators for learning outcomes for each student. Examination of the nature of  
12 an assessment item and an individual student's responsiveness to the item rather  
13 than just correctness of response can provide insight into the student's development.  
14 Difficulty of an item is not just a statistical description but also represents a dif-  
15 ferent interaction for each student, according to context. Examination of items and  
16 responses can highlight misconceptions and lead to improved instruction. As Mat-  
17 ters notes, such examination may even reveal some flaws in the assessment items  
18 and tests themselves. Her overall conclusions reiterate her call for more focus on  
19 development of quality assessments, in any form, and much more focus on using  
20 available assessment information for learning improvement.

21 Sverre Tveit brings the perspective of a student to educational assessment issues,  
22 albeit the perspective of a student now engaged in graduate studies. Tveit's account  
23 of the Norwegian assessment experience of the past two decades provides an insight  
24 into the impact of differing agendas on education experiences, goals and assessment  
25 practices. Tveit was a member of the School-Student Union of Norway at a time  
26 when the government decided to implement major national changes to assessment.  
27 The Norwegian government's action was in response to perceived national 'fail-  
28 ure' on international tests such as PISA, considering the high expenditure of the  
29 nation on education. Tveit provides an overview of pedagogical development in  
30 Norway, drawing on a range of policy documents as well as personal experience.  
31 He describes the assessment regimes of Norway at local and national levels and  
32 the various attempted changes by the government—in conjunction with the oppo-  
33 sition demonstrated by students, educators, assessment experts and politicians in  
34 opposition. His chapter provides a very clear exposition of the impact of external  
35 factors on national practice and the political roles that education and assessment  
36 play across the world today. Tveit's overview demonstrates a system exhibiting local  
37 authority and national accountability of teachers in a way uncommon to most other  
38 nations, with the concept of official, random examinations for students as a monitor  
39 of overall schooling effectiveness and student preparedness. Most importantly, Tveit  
40 examines the system of assessment in Norway with the critical eye of a student,  
41 seeking evidence for research-based underpinning of practice and teacher profes-  
42 sional development, and consistency in goals and purposes. He makes a number of  
43 propositions for future reform of assessment in Norway. While Tveit's exploration  
44 of assessment is set in a singular assessment culture, his descriptions of theory,  
45 practice and issues will resonate throughout the international community.

01 The assessment context for the chapter by Ann Kelly is vocational education. She  
02 adopts a situated approach and calls for an extension to current assessment of skills  
03 development. Worldwide, vocational assessment has been moving to a competency-  
04 based approach. The competences reflect identified component skills, both lower  
05 order and higher order, in the development of guild knowledge (see page x). Thus,  
06 the expectation underpinning this approach was that apprenticeships could become  
07 part of formal educational contexts, in the same way that general education became  
08 institutionalised at the commencement of the 20th century, to cope with the needed  
09 growth in education for the Industrial Revolution. Aspects of the apprenticeship  
10 could be identified and confirmed. A further advantage envisaged for formal voca-  
11 tional education and a competence approach was the capacity to allow apprentices to  
12 proceed at their own learning and developmental paces. However, the formalisation  
13 of apprenticeships and vocational education into competences has left many consid-  
14 ering that the essence of guild knowledge is missing—competences can become  
15 superficial rather than rich descriptions of a skill base (page x). In her chapter,  
16 Kelly has unpacked this issue and explored a way in which the richness of skills  
17 development can be explored, using the methodology of conversational analysis  
18 to examine authentic enactment of an area of communication competences. Such  
19 an analysis allows the identification and assessment of the tacit knowledges that  
20 underpin performance. While this analysis provides a telling instance of elaborated  
21 assessment in a vocational context, it also demonstrates central themes that emerge  
22 from the authors of this book: assessment is most effective when the individual is  
23 targeted; individual performance needs elaboration in order to be effective, mak-  
24 ing high demand on assessment processes; and the situated context of assessment  
25 interacts with the performance.

26 Standards as conceptual identities emerge in the discussions of a number of our  
27 authors. Within each chapter, the conceptual identity each author attributes to ‘stan-  
28 dards’ should emerge for the reader. In his chapter, Graham Maxwell provides a  
29 theoretical and policy-based consideration of the situated constructions of ‘stan-  
30 dards’ commonly being used around the world and the many contexts that influence  
31 such construction of concepts. Maxwell provides an analytical framework, elabo-  
32 rating four dimensions that can be considered to explore the contextual use of a  
33 concept of standards: type, focus, underlying characteristic or construct and pur-  
34 pose. Maxwell shows that cultural contexts provide very different interpretations  
35 for standards, from conceptions of standards as a form of curriculum framework to  
36 conceptions of standards as indicators of levels of performance. Within the latter,  
37 many different meanings are still visible in practice. He notes the constant ten-  
38 sion between descriptions of performance against standards or others (notionally  
39 criterion-referenced and normative standards) despite the basis of both in guild  
40 knowledge. The one has always informed the other—we only understand perfection  
41 by understanding what is not perfection, and we need a model as a comparator.  
42 Overall, Maxwell exhorts educators to identify and clarify the meanings we ascribe  
43 to our constructions of a ‘standard’ to enable common conversations about inten-  
44 tions and to clarify the social and cultural contexts that frame these conversations.  
45 Throughout his explorations of these frameworks and meanings, Maxwell keeps

01 a central imperative on their impact for the individual learner, working from the  
02 central ‘purpose of education [which] is to enable the advancement of the personal  
03 knowledge and capabilities of each student to the fullest extent possible and to pre-  
04 pare them for further learning and development throughout their life’ (page x). It is  
05 Maxwell who notes that the children entering school today can expect to live during  
06 most of the 21st century and many will enter the 22nd century.

07 In working through the chapters in the book and exploring the ideas presented  
08 by our authors, readers will notice commonalities and differences, which we now  
09 consider.

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### 13 **Assessment Commonalities in Diversity**

14

15 There can be no doubt that education in this century is a dynamic and exciting  
16 discipline. Students and teachers are engaging in learning dialogues of unprece-  
17 dented complexity in recognition of changing times, changing needs, changing  
18 social groupings and, not least, changing technology. Educational policy is seen  
19 as a significant political area, with resultant high focus on educational content  
20 and delivery. Each of these dimensions of current educational contexts has import  
21 for educational assessment, ensuring that the traditional concept of ‘testing’ is to  
22 modern educational practice as the quill is to textual recording.

23 In this book, we have drawn together the voices of international experts in edu-  
24 cational assessment, talking about the issues with which they are concerned and  
25 providing opportunity to identify possible directions for future action. Even though  
26 the book is intended to be comprehensive, it can only touch on the issues and  
27 practices engaging educational assessment. What we hope we have portrayed suc-  
28 cessfully are the ongoing and increasing complexity and significance of the role of  
29 good educational assessment in modern education practice and the challenges that  
30 present in attaining such a goal.

31 The 21st century has commenced with high expectations, not just for student  
32 outcomes but also for the professionalism of teachers and authorities—of clarity of  
33 purpose, approach and language, of recognition of different theoretical framings of  
34 assessment and, not least, of an overall care for the educational opportunities for all  
35 students.

36 The authors in this book have written from a range of different theoretical and  
37 methodological framings of assessment, reflecting what are often referred to as  
38 different paradigms.

39 Beyond points of difference, however, there are several calls that readers will  
40 hear resonating across the chapters. We refer deliberately to these as ‘calls’, in  
41 that they invite action in the fields of research, policy and practice. While readers  
42 will no doubt hear such calls differently, in this chapter we offer our framing—our  
43 hearing—of these. Throughout the chapters, a recurring call is for assessment to be  
44 relevant to the needs of the individual learner, in order to improve their educational  
45 opportunities and life outcomes and to provide the individual learner the opportunity

01 to voice their needs. This goes beyond the long-standing stance for learner-centred  
02 approaches to a recognition of learner agency and the active contributions of the  
03 learner to inform how learning, and therefore assessment, should occur. The gravity  
04 of this call is to the fore when there is also the clear connection between educa-  
05 tional, and more specifically, assessment opportunities and life opportunities. All too  
06 often in the past, assessment has worked to limit, even prescribe, such opportunities,  
07 inevitably impacting on what and how individuals achieve in social, workplace and  
08 civic spheres.

09 An expansion on this is the need to go beyond policies of inclusion (which can  
10 focus on stereotypical and group identification drawing on a deficit perspective)  
11 to develop policies that recognise diversity and the complexity of the individual  
12 learner. Increasingly, teachers report that one of their main challenges in classroom  
13 practice is how to provide responsive teaching and assessment to diverse learners.  
14 Many of our authors recognised such challenges and demonstrated that assessment  
15 needs to chart student learning from the perspective of an underpinning theory of  
16 learning progress and development—whether such a theory is based on cognitive  
17 science, psychometric analyses, curriculum theories or combinations of these. From  
18 the standpoint of an underpinning theory of learning progress and development, the  
19 purposes of standards can be moved away from being a ‘standardising’ influence.  
20 More specifically, they need to be rethought and clearly defined in terms of their role  
21 in supporting learners and teachers in progressing learning and in understanding  
22 differences across learning development.

23 There is also the strong call in the chapters for ‘salient’ or revealing evidence  
24 to support such charting and assessment of learning development, whether from  
25 formal or informal bases. Constant, therefore, is the need for sources of informa-  
26 tion and documentation. Related to this is the recurring challenge for assessment to  
27 take seriously the issues of equity by unpacking how the judgments of progress are  
28 being made. At play here are critical matters of the types of information that count  
29 as evidence and the ways in which the evidence is treated. Further, the chapters  
30 open spaces for different niche approaches to assessment and highlight the need for  
31 assessment researchers to theorise assessment practices in greater depth, elaborating  
32 and clarifying contexts and assumptions. This is particularly to the fore, for example,  
33 in how our chapters have conscientiously included commentary on the impact of  
34 technology on assessment, explored from various dimensions. What differentiates  
35 the 20th century from the beginning of the 21st century is the exponential and unbe-  
36 lievable development of new methods of communication, representing knowledge,  
37 and making knowledge available. Within this framework of the developments of the  
38 past 30 years—from clunky computer terminals with limited capacity to hand-held  
39 devices more powerful than computers of a decade ago and from a paper-based  
40 society to the development of the World Wide Web and the Internet in the past two  
41 decades—change in practices in education and assessment is inevitable.

42 Last but not least, there is a call for opportunities to enhance the professional  
43 development of teachers. This development is taken to include the repertoires of  
44 assessment practices that teachers rely on, especially in relation to student diver-  
45 sity and inclusion as well as teachers’ own knowledge of what counts as quality

01 assessment and ways to promote student learning. This, of course, becomes critical,  
02 given the intensified policy interest in accountability of school decision making and  
03 transparency in how judgements, including grading decisions, are arrived at.  
04

05

## 06 **Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards:** 07 **Developing an Interactionist Perspective** 08

09

10 A decade ago, Delandshere & Petrosky (1998) reported how, in the then recent  
11 past, there had been 'a shift in the rhetoric (if not yet the practice) of assessment'  
12 (p. 15). They went on to identify how, by 1998, 'much more emphasis [had] been  
13 placed on the support of learning and teaching than on the sorting and ranking of  
14 individuals' (p. 15). This observation informed their characterisation of how, at that  
15 time, 'the field of assessment [was] challenged by many conflicting purposes that  
16 create interesting problems', referring in particular to the challenges associated with  
17 how 'performance assessment systems are implemented for their potential impact on  
18 instruction and, more generally, as a way to promote systemic change in schools'  
19 (p. 15).

20 The chapters in this book provide clear evidence of how the field of assessment,  
21 and further, the practice of assessment, has strengthened the focus on how assess-  
22 ment can support learning and teaching. Across the chapters, the concentration on  
23 assessment to improve the quality of learning is to the fore. Also clear is a shift  
24 in rhetoric away from 'the problems' of assessment through to opportunities for  
25 rethinking assessment. The chapters provide frames for seeing how such rethink-  
26 ing is occurring in relation to the changing contexts of education, developments in  
27 learning theory and different ways of thinking about the nature of knowledge itself.

28 Further, the book as a whole presents new insights into the nature of assessment  
29 that go beyond the notion of assessment as evidence-based practice. There is recog-  
30 nition of how assessment is contextualised practice, linking in complex ways to  
31 social, cultural and policy/political contexts. This opens the space for a new appre-  
32 ciation of the forces at play in shaping how assessment occurs and should occur. In  
33 regard to the latter, there are, of course, the forces that are tied to ongoing and rapid  
34 changes in ICTs, bringing with them new interaction possibilities, as well as new  
35 ways to use, represent and create knowledge.

36 It might be interesting for readers to revisit the idea, introduced earlier, that while  
37 we, as editors, made choices about the writers who would be invited to contribute  
38 chapters, taking account of what we knew of previous writings, we were not seeking  
39 to give greater prominence to any particular theoretical tradition or approach in the  
40 field of assessment. Therefore, on reflection, we know that different paradigms in  
41 assessment research focus on measurement versus assessment paradigms, with the  
42 former seen as having psychological and psychometric bases and the latter being  
43 more socially constructivist based. The authors in this collection show, however,  
44 that such characterisations may be too simplistic for assessment directions for the  
45 21st century. Instead, there is emerging a new appreciation of how theoretical and

01 disciplinary stances, and contexts and modes for enacting assessment, are funda-  
02 mentally interactionist. Beyond this, there are some signs of movement towards  
03 a multitheoretical assessment approach. Readers will observe, for example, that  
04 writers working within the psychometric paradigms explored and considered socio-  
05 cultural contexts, while, overall, the different assessment paradigms recognised the  
06 need for theoretical progressions of learning. Such signs hold promise for paradig-  
07 matic change, whereby assessment practices incorporate technological change and  
08 offer both new performance and new learning contexts that take account of new  
09 student cohorts.

10 We hope that you as readers find this book a valuable addition to your library  
11 on assessment. We encourage you to delve into the chapters and to make your  
12 own reflections on the influence of the different theoretical and methodological  
13 frameworks of the authors on their work. We invite you to consider whether the  
14 frameworks are necessarily incompatible or whether they can all be perceived to  
15 contribute to our understanding of learners and learning and to contribute to the  
16 research, policy and practice imperatives that have identified the significant role  
17 that assessment plays in education at this point in the 21st century.

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