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Position Paper
**Changing
Assessment
Culture**

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Changing Assessment Culture

The International Education Assessment Network (IEAN) is a network of small countries and territories who are seeking to improve their assessment systems. IEAN is a learning community which enables a process of 'learning with' as well as 'learning from' members.

This paper is concerned with supporting systems who wish to 'change assessment culture' and in doing so reconcile beliefs, values and 'what we know to be true' of high-quality teaching and learning with those about assessment. It presents an ecological view of assessment culture which is positioned within distinct contexts which, we argue, requires an international, rather than global, perspective of education and assessment to be taken.

Introduction

Research and practice informed thinking about curriculum and pedagogy has sought to inform significant change in the education systems of various countries and jurisdictions. Change has been supported by increased international collaboration and co-operation between policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. One such model of collaboration is the International Education Assessment Network (IEAN), where representatives from different international contexts seek to improve their assessment systems through engaging with and reflecting on the systems and practices of other member states.

However, it is noted that leading systemic change in assessment, to serve a broad range of educational purposes, is one of the most complex processes of educational change. This paper explores how meaningful change in assessment at systemic level might be secured. It recognises the sensitive and nuanced nature of what it means to change a deeply embedded culture, where beliefs, practices and procedures have been ascribed a status that makes change a difficult and contested process. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on assessment practices in so many countries, and the nature of the debates that have accompanied these enforced changes, is testament to how strongly held perspectives on assessment are; perspectives that are often divergent and contentious.

In making the case that meaningful assessment change entails an understanding of cultural change, this paper will explore the following ideas:

- What do we mean by assessment?
- What are the characteristics of a culture?
- What do we mean by assessment culture?
- What elements of assessment culture may facilitate or hinder the enactment of a 'learning culture' in our systems?

Part 1: Assessment Culture

The term 'assessment culture' brings together two complex and contested terms. This section examines both independently and then collectively to locate conceptually the territory this paper speaks to. Assessment culture is complex and so this section continues by describing culture across an ecosystem stretching across layers and morphing into micro-culture and sub-cultures depending on the contextual conditions at play.

Defining Assessment

The complexity inherent in thinking about what assessment culture means becomes evident when we look at how the definition of assessment itself is often contested, or at least open to different interpretations and based on different assumptions. For instance, the conflation of the term 'assessment', in some cultures, with that of 'evaluation' is problematic as the equivalence of these two terms can lead to a reductive understanding and lack of appreciation of the centrality of assessment in learning and teaching.

Various definitions of the term assessment are offered in literature on the subject. The example offered here is characteristic of these definitions: that assessment is 'the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes' (NCCA, 2007, p. 7). However, it is acknowledged here that this definition does not adequately address other relevant considerations, such as the following three overarching concepts that are accorded significance in international literature (Lysaght, Scully, Murchan, O'Leary & Shiel, 2019):

- assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning;
- assessment exists along a continuum, from intuitive through planned interactions to assessment events;
- assessment provides information for various stakeholders, first of which is the child/student, and also includes teachers, parents, school leaders, policy makers, third level institutes, employers and the state.

It is useful to reflect on how these concepts might help us to form a more considered and nuanced view of assessment, moving from the identification of the term in a narrow sense with testing or examinations towards its integration with learning, curriculum and pedagogy.

A conceptual understanding of assessment, as represented in Figure 1, has been advanced by some jurisdictions in recent times. Within this model assessment is seen as a continuum which can range from 'intuitive assessment' to 'planned interactions' to 'assessment events'. Within this model the three types of assessment are complementary, and necessary to gain a comprehensive picture of progression and learning.

It is proposed that this conceptual understanding of the term assessment provides an appropriate and agreed basis for the exploration of its cultural context that now follows.

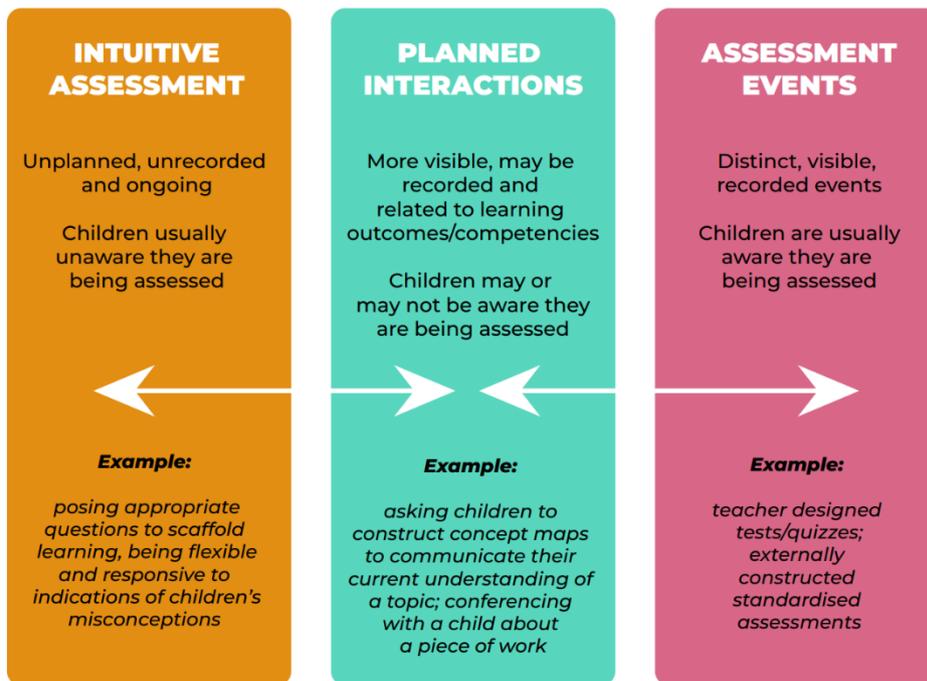


Figure 1 – Continuum of assessment (NCCA, 2020, p. 23)

Thinking about Culture

Before exploring what a culture of assessment looks like, it is necessary to examine what we mean by the term 'culture' in a broader sense. The following represent some ideas around the concept of culture that might be helpful in considering ideas relating to assessment culture:

- Culture relates to the experience of being human. It evolves from the lived experience of the human condition.
- Culture relates to how the lived experience of the human condition is perceived by a collective or society, and the values, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs that emerge from this exploration of the human condition.
- When these values, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs are ascribed significance by a community, they are built upon, shared, and developed into a way of life or way of being.
- This way of being is accorded a profound status whereby a society is bound together by a shared, institutional meaning or identity where these characteristics of culture are considered significant, as having a deep purpose.

The definition offered by Guy Rocher (1992) is proposed as an appropriate one in the context of this paper, where culture is described as:

a linked set of more or less formalised ways of thinking, feeling and acting which, being learned and shared by a plurality of people, serve, in both an objective and symbolic way, to constitute these people into a particular and distinct community.

Towards an Understanding of Assessment Culture

So how does this brief reflection on the meaning of culture enhance our understanding of assessment? In the first instance, it helps us to guard against using the term 'culture' in a superficial or generic way. This can mean using 'culture' as an 'umbrella' term for testing and learning or reducing the term assessment to a mere standardisation of practice. Thinking more deeply about what culture denotes supports more meaningful and profound reflection and conversation about assessment.

Therefore, thinking about assessment in terms of values, beliefs and assumptions helps us to identify what our systems and our societies view as important in our respective assessment regimes. Importantly, this focus on culture also equips us with the language to enable us to challenge these values, beliefs, and assumptions, and to explore how assessment culture influences or affects learning culture, and the tools and practices that enable this influence.

So, for instance, we can critique assessment culture as having three possible effects in a jurisdiction or system:

- **Culture can be a context for explaining why certain things happen.** The effect of this interpretation is that an assessment regime is often in place based on past notions of what society deems reasonable and sensible and also on tradition or long-standing practice. This reflects as a cultural perspective where a system has always done things in a particular way and so should continue to do so.
- **Culture can mean control.** This implies that certain practices are in place because they are dictated 'from above' (from educational policy makers) to control practices in the field ('top-down' conception).
- **Culture can mean learning.** Through processes of 'acculturation' which support teachers' professional development. From this perspective, a culture pertains where a 'bottom-up' movement is valued and includes co-construction between partners.

By using the language of culture in exploring assessment, or by using culture as a lens through which to see assessment, we can try to understand the rituals and routines in assessment that are entrenched in culture and ask questions such as:

- Why, in some contexts, are marks, grades or percentages accepted as the definitive manifestation of assessment practice? What are the concrete, discrete factors that lead to this acceptance?
- Why is the belief in that definitive stance perpetuated repeatedly, often without question, and in the context of wider curricular or even societal change?

Assessment Culture as Layered

Thinking about how culture is manifest at different layers of a society or collective is also helpful in the context of interrogating assessment, and how assessment culture is evident at different layers of the education ecosystem. It is helpful to invoke the thinking of Thijs and Van Den Akker (2009) in this context when they speak of the different layers of an education system in this way (the model that is detailed in Figure 2 varies slightly in some systems).

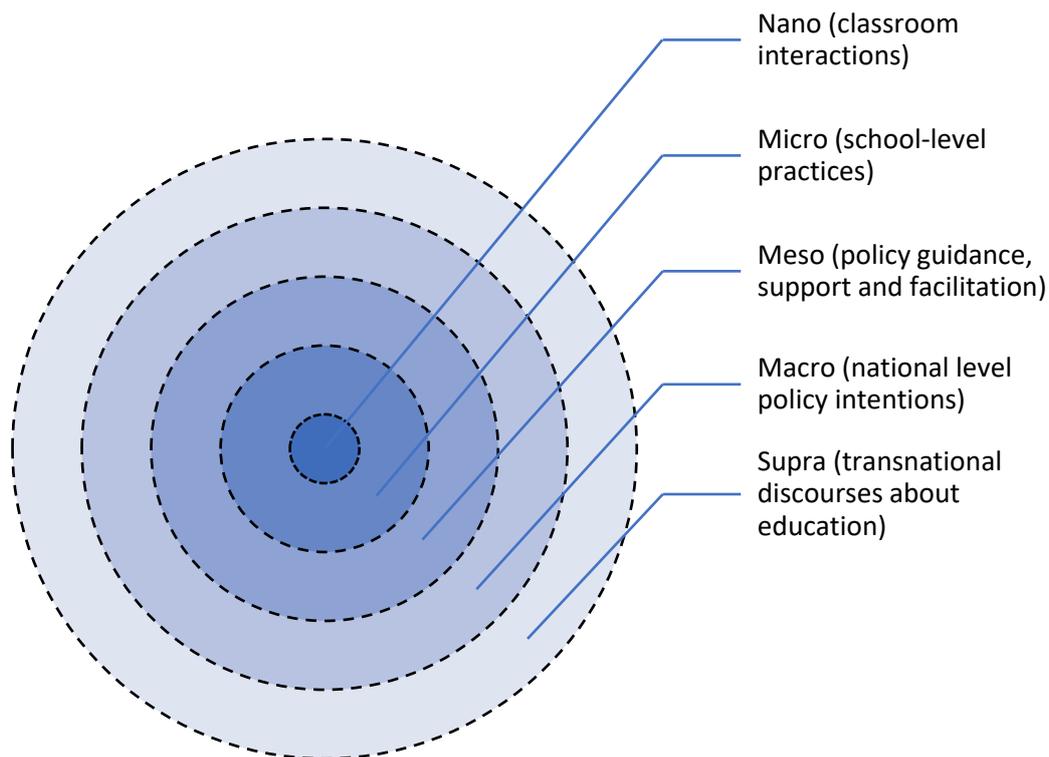


Figure 2: Layers of an education system

The authors here make some points that are relevant to understanding assessment culture. It is important to stress that if we wish to understand assessment culture, we need to look at how that culture is nestled within the context of a complex (and organic) system and how the connections or bridges between layers of a system are made – or not as the case may be. Birenbaum (2014, p. 286) discusses the complexity of such systems. She points out that such systems are organic and open; and are ‘characterized by paradoxes and contradictions; operating within the range of opposite ends.’ The complexity of the ecosystem is evident in how assessment culture is experienced differently in different sites of the ecosystem and how subsystems such as selection processes for higher education impact on the assessment culture experienced in classrooms. So this complexity needs to be acknowledged. Thijs and Van Den Akker argue that there are different practices within each stratum that they identify and that these practices are transformed, translated, and mediated from layer to layer. The work of Allal (2016) is also instructive in relation to culture operating at different layers. She suggests that the

culture of schooling and of assessment can be explored in a more nuanced way when seen through the prism offered by different layers.

So, if we apply this thinking about layers or strata to assessment culture, we can see how the concept of culture is not fixed or uniform. At one level, it can refer to a socially transmitted body of beliefs, practices, and tools that are found **throughout an educational system**. This definition relates to the idea of a 'worldwide system of schooling' where, despite certain national differences or distinctions, certain features are pervasive, such as, for example, grading, assessment as summative rather than formative, hierarchising and selecting children/students. At another level, it pertains to the contextualised set of beliefs, practices, and tools that are socially constructed by the actors **in each classroom**.

'Microculture' and 'Meaning'

This concept of layers relates to the idea of a 'microculture' (Cobb *et al*, 1997), where each classroom and school, although bound by shared resources or systemic influences in a particular jurisdiction, is distinctive in terms of the meaning ascribed to learning, teaching and assessment by teachers and children/students (Mottier Lopez, 2013).

A further related concept developed by Cobb *et al.* (1997) is that 'meaning' (such as meaning attributed to assessment aims, practices and tools) is never identical in the minds of all actors (children, teachers). A useful example here is where grading in peer assessment can affect children negatively, creating a competitive atmosphere and inflated grades. In this example, the tools (*grades and peer assessment*), beliefs (e.g. *'grades are used to quantify children's learning; you don't give peers a low grade'*) and the practice (*peer assessment with grades*) combine to shape the culture of the classroom. Research by Jónsson and Geirsdóttir (2020) suggests that this tendency to use grades as the primary source of feedback negatively affected learning-oriented practices in schools that they studied. Interestingly, this was notable in schools with long experience of implementing a policy of assessment for learning.

Cobb *et al* (*ibid*) contend that interactions among actors are critical to enable the emergence of 'taken-as-shared' meaning that frames and guides their activities. This concept acknowledges that actors bring certain histories, experiences and understandings to their new practice and supports the view that culture, and in turn assessment culture, is never completely stabilised, but is constantly shifting.

The next section of this paper will examine how some of the features of assessment culture explored here engage and intersect as a change in assessment culture is proposed and enacted.

Part 2 – Changing Assessment Culture

Change is often thought of as a contentious and messy process involving the surrendering of long held beliefs, practices and tools while exploring, experimenting and enacting the unfamiliar. Naturally questions arise as to the purpose and nature of change, particularly when the ways of the past have served a nation well – or when on an individual level a conviction is held that ‘it didn’t do me any harm’ and ‘made me who I am today’.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged our assessment processes and brought into sharp relief the connected nature of our world and yet the distinctive characteristics, qualities and actions of each nation. It has surfaced questions related to equity and fairness, posing professional dilemmas and inviting public discourse on our assessment processes. This, it appears, is an opportune time to consider these dilemmas and to present a renewed approach to thinking about changing assessment culture.

So what change in assessment culture are members of IEAN proposing?

In short, the change proposed involves three aspects;

- reconciling beliefs, values and ‘what we know to be true’ of high-quality teaching and learning with those about assessment;
- understanding culture change in the context of the ecosystem in which it exists;
- an appreciation of the distinct contexts in which assessment cultures exist and for an international, rather than global, perspective to be taken.

The section below sets out an understanding of change which acknowledges the complexity of the task, the personal and contextual aspects involved and the need to support professional deliberation and engagement across the educational ecosystem, not just at school and classroom levels.

The Educational Ecosystem

Education systems are by their nature complex, inter-dependent and dynamic. The array of ministries, departments, agencies, units, partners, stakeholders, commentators and actors can result in multiple interpretations of the purpose and nature of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly as change is introduced. Understanding policy change as both text and discourse (Ball, 1993), interpreted and re-interpreted within a multiplicity of contexts acknowledges the challenge of change in complex educational ecosystems. As Hatch states, the introduction of new policies ‘...have to be carefully examined in the same way that we have to consider how new species and new developments will affect the ecosystems into which they are introduced’ (2002, p. 634).

Take for example, the introduction a well-intentioned policy in an effort to support transparency, the collection of data at a national level and monitoring of children’s progress in learning. The new policy requires the administrating of standardised

tests on an annual basis and the reporting of scores to children's parents. Without the required sense-making at local level and professional development for teachers and school leaders in their assessment literacy, what can take place includes:

- a dominant culture of achievement rather than progression;
- parents and teachers making unhealthy and uninformed comparisons between children;
- a narrowing of learning experiences through the curriculum as children 'prepare for the test';
- a culture of 'teaching to the test';
- a loss of a sense of choice, flexibility and agency for teachers and children. (O'Leary et al, 2019)

The contradiction at the heart of this example – the attempt to support transparency leading to a shadowy culture of teaching to the test - stresses the need for collective over individual ownership and interpretation of the vision and purpose of assessment change. Van den Akker (2018) argues that 'bridges' between the various layers and actors must be part of this collective engagement and ownership, asserting that:

A general pattern is that the worlds of policy, practice and research are often diffuse and widely separated. A crucial challenge for more successful innovations in education is to build bridges between many levels, factors and actors. (p.8)

How layers of the educational ecosystem interact, or not, with each other has consequences for how assessment change is engaged with and enacted. The role power plays vertically, horizontally and over time across layers of the educational ecosystem often demarcate who is engaged in policy discourse and whether those charged with enacting policy are in fact part of the conversation. Further, the interactions teachers, working at the micro layer, have with the macro elements of the ecosystem can often be an indicator as to the levels of reciprocity, trust and professionalism supported by the ecosystem. If these interactions – through policy artefacts and actors – are characterised by judgement, selection processes, management and control then it is unlikely they will support a healthy, nurturing and sustaining culture of teaching, learning and assessment. Rather it opens the door for subversion, multiple assessment identities and the establishment of contradictory assessment sub-cultures. Attention then is required as to the context change is introduced and the collective engagement with the purpose of change.

Context and Purpose

As discussed in the opening sections of this paper, recognising the context in which an assessment culture exists is a critical aspect of understanding the underlying values at the heart of the culture. Current conceptualisations of assessment culture are strongly influenced by considerations at a supra layer, with globalisation, policy borrowing and the role of international assessments playing significant roles. Taking account of such a landscape, this paper puts forward an alternative perspective that should be foregrounded in the area of assessment culture and change. Taking an international perspective in this space calls on countries to work

in a collaborative way, while still taking account of their individual national contexts and foci. From this standpoint, less emphasis is placed on globalisation and competitive comparisons between countries and more on how individual countries can improve and change current culture by learning with and from each other's experiences. This viewpoint is also in-keeping with the ecosystem model, as outlined above, when changing assessment culture is being considered. In this model the layers sitting underneath the supra layer take on additional importance, as it is through these layers that a country's experience is fully understood, and from which others can learn. The macro layer includes a country's political histories, its collective experience, and its expectations for, of and from education.

While assessment systems may have served countries well in the past (for a variety of economic imperatives and selection processes for higher education for instance), in many cases the purposes of education have moved on and so too must curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. For many nations, for example, the purpose of education might include the development of participative citizens. To develop citizens who are participative, education, including assessment culture, must adapt and travel forward. For example, the pedagogy of working individually through a textbook is unlikely to create an active citizen; undue emphasis on completing multiple choice questions is unlikely to encourage creativity; emphasis on grades and percentages (summative outputs) is unlikely to deepen a child's ability to reflect on their own learning. It is not that these approaches are intrinsically wrong, it is just that they are unlikely to facilitate the connections between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment that are needed to support progressive notions of what education should provide for young people and society.

The culture operating at a macro level impacts upon the micro-cultures at individual and school level. In turn, these are influenced by personal beliefs, values, experiences, knowledge and expertise of actors at the micro level. Historical practices embedded within schools and educational institutions can wield significant power and influence particularly when these are perceived as performing well in the context they are currently operating. Changing the established assessment culture can be difficult when actors have attached themselves to pre-established practice. In many cases, teachers may have been involved in embedding an existing culture with good intention and therefore when new evidence points to a better way, may find such a departure from the established culture particularly difficult. Additionally, children themselves can feel the power and influence of an existing assessment culture and may develop expectations resistant to a change in that culture.

Such issues centralise the importance and need for a shared understanding of the purpose of education and the role of assessment within this. In light of these issues, this paper proposes a cultural shift that tilts the balance from judging to learning. Considering assessment as a means to encourage and enable learning for the individual, school or nation is central to this viewpoint and reinforces the need to align what we value about good teaching and learning with our views of assessment. Moreover, it is imperative to engage all actors in questions and conversations about such a purpose across a range of contexts. The complexity of this purpose of assessment also contributes to the intricacy of the assessment process in its own right (Looney, Cumming, van Der Kleij & Harris, 2017). In some

instances, individual teachers can be subject to the influence of multiple cultures, which are often dependent on the sector they are working in, the assessment culture they negotiate, and the discipline they teach. Such scenarios raise questions as to the expectations of teachers to act within a context with multiple, and sometimes competing, assessment cultures. Take for example the use of high stakes examinations as a dominant feature of selection processes to higher education which can have an effect of narrowing the range of curriculum and assessment opportunities for learners. While these cultures can shape the practice of teachers, they also feel a need to 'manage' this complexity and this at times compels them to develop 'sub-cultures' of assessment by 'teaching to the test', 'preparing for the exam', 'gaming the system' or positioning themselves alongside their children/students 'in opposition to the system'. In order to support alignment and coherence across a system and negate the impact sub-cultures can have on how teachers and children/students see themselves, a shared purpose of education and an understanding of the role assessment and assessment systems play in this is necessary at the very outset. As we think about how this can be achieved, processes of engagement and change become pertinent.

Teacher Assessment Identity

Increasingly assessment is viewed as a lever for school and system reform. Much recent literature points to the role of assessment in many jurisdictions as not just an object of reform but indeed the main instrument of reform. This perception of the purposes of assessment has seen an increased research focus on teachers' capacity to engage meaningfully with the process of assessment and has generated much thinking on 'assessment literacy', which relates to the capacities of teachers to engage meaningfully with various aspects of the assessment process.

More recently, ideas around assessment literacy have been extended beyond teachers' capacities to incorporate teachers' conceptions and beliefs. Focusing on conceptions entails a more complex relationship between knowledge and practice that invokes ideas of assessment as a sociocultural activity, shaped by some influences already outlined in this paper. In this context, it is proposed that the emotional aspect of assessment be added to ideas around assessment literacy and conceptions of literacy when considering teachers' role in assessment. Such thinking has generated the concept of teacher assessment identity. This concept acknowledges the complex dimensions that shape teacher assessment practices and engagement. It includes knowledge and skills, and the self-efficacy and confidence that underpins teachers' implementation of them. But crucially, it also accommodates the interplay of feelings, beliefs and emotions that teachers bring to their work as well. Therefore, the concept of identity in exploring cultural change is worthy of consideration, as it focuses not just on what teachers do, but on who they are (Looney et al, 2017).

Processes of Change

Change within ecosystems can be characterised in two ways – as an impactful change event or as an incremental evolution of environmental conditions. The impact of an economic crash eroding educational resources, supports and

infrastructure can be seen as a ‘change event’, even though the processes leading up to that point may have involved change over time. The creep towards a more globalised and aggregated view of learning in the opening decades of this century can be thought of as an incremental process. In both examples the change reverberates continuously and can eventually result in imbalances in the ecosystem.

In thinking about a rebalancing, identifying the conditions conducive to a healthy ecosystem is a good starting point and well documented in literature. These, however, fall short in providing a comprehensive understanding of change processes as they are not concerned with the contextual interplays between competing epistemologies (Adie, Addison, Lingard, 2021) beliefs, emotional attachments, values, actions and identities of those acting within it. Providing research-informed information and policy in the hope that ‘if teachers know more about assessment they will change assessment culture on their own’ is not enough. Instead, IEAN members assert that through the nourishment of professional deliberation, research, participatory discourses, collaboration and reflexivity, the alignment of beliefs and practices about ‘good’ teaching with those about assessment can be achieved. This paper continues by setting out a process through which actors—teachers, school leaders, policy makers, researchers, parents, and children—can be engaged in the continual processes of change in our educational ecosystems.

Making it Happen

In an effort to reconcile beliefs, values and practices of high-quality teaching with those of assessment, IEAN members have identified processes conducive to supporting a pragmatic and enabling approach. These include: deconstruction, critical engagement with research-informed artefacts (including exemplification), ethical deliberation, reflexivity, and co-construction towards a resolution. Importantly, all of these processes are grounded in the context and experiences of the members.

Deconstructing Assessment Culture

Informed by the thinking around ‘microculture’ as previously mentioned, this paper suggests that a useful framework for deconstructing assessment culture might be the exploration of:

- **assessment identities** encompassing knowledge and skills, self-efficacy and confidence, including the interplay of feelings and emotions towards assessment;
- **beliefs** regarding the aims of assessment and its relationship to teaching and learning;
- the assessment **practices** that are implemented, and at times imposed, and in which children/students participate;
- the assessment **tools** that enact the application of or, in some cases, inhibit these practices.

The use of exemplification can be a powerful stimulus for processes of deconstruction. Involving actors from across the system in critical engagement with examples of teaching, learning and assessment in action can promote discussion and debate of the role assessment plays in education.

Professional Deliberation and Enquiry

Through the process of professional enquiry, a dilemma (e.g., a conflict between beliefs, values and practices) is identified and deconstructed. Such dilemmas are often uncovered through teacher reflection, peer learning and collaboration, engagement with research, policy change and/or critical engagement with examples of teaching, learning and assessment. As these 'professional controversies' (Lopez and Pasquini, 2017) are deconstructed and deliberated upon it is acknowledged that there will be differences of opinion and, rather than just sharing views, the role of professional debate is to welcome oppositional views and work ahead collaboratively in a spirit of co-construction. In recent years, these processes have been central to some instances of curriculum review where stakeholders from across the layers of the ecosystem come together to engage on a sustained basis in the deconstruction of educational conundrums. In the deliberative process, Mahieu (2011) insists on reaching a consensus on the decisions and actions to be taken while accepting that different representations may remain about the situation concerned. Furthermore, within this deliberative space it is critical to not only acknowledge the values and perceptions of different stakeholder groups, but to ensure these are at the centre of the change process. The benefit of this process has been clearly seen in recent years, with efforts to incorporate the voices of teachers, children/students and schools in co-constructing, trialling and piloting curriculum developments through School Forums, School Networks and Pioneer Schools.

Throughout the process, high-quality information in the form of research literature, as well as experiences and exemplification from sites of enactment need to come from a range of sources and must be interpreted according to the context in which deliberations are taking place. In this sense the voices of children/students, when engaged with meaningfully and on a sustained basis, can centre deliberation and refocus attention on the purposes of education and assessment. Further, the outcomes of the process need to be reflected on critically, justified and communicated (Goyer et al., 2017; Legault, 2004), so as to acknowledge the points of concern of those with opposing views and to recognize that these too must be engaged with.

An involvement in this process necessitates engagement with one's deeply held beliefs about education and opens them up to affirmation, challenge and critique. When artfully executed this process supports deep professional learning as well as a renewed sense of professional purpose, and is a method through which beliefs, values, practice and assessment identities can be changed (Feucht, Lunn Brownlee & Schraw, 2017).

Concluding Remarks

While it may be appealing to think of this process occurring solely in schools and classrooms, IEAN proposes that this is required across all communities of practice in the education ecosystem. Consideration of agency is significant in this context and Priestley et al (2015) offers an ecological approach.

...we do not see agency as a capacity of individuals, that is, as something individuals can claim to 'have' or 'possess', but rather see it as something individuals and groups can manage to achieve – or not, of course. Agency is therefore to be understood as resulting from the interplay of individuals' capacities and environment conditions. This makes it important not just to look at individuals and what they are able or not able to do but also at the cultures, structures and relationships that shape particular 'ecologies' within which teachers work. (p.138)

Further, engagement in ethical deliberation of this kind is required between, not just within, layers of the ecosystem in an effort to build bridges and craft coherence towards a shared understanding of the purposes of teaching, learning and assessment in practice. It also requires an open and honest exploration of the infrastructure supporting the ecosystem, which can include examining questions such as:

- Is the infrastructure too centralised, too diffuse, or too fragmented?
- What kinds of activity through the meso layer is supportive of enactment? What structures are in place to support these?
- Are the interactions between layers characterised by openness, honesty and trust?
- Do teachers and school leaders have the necessary time and space to engage in a change in culture?

Engagement with these questions requires a systemwide openness to innovation and adaptation, to trial and error, to taking calculated risks and seeing professional practice across the ecosystem as being in a constant state of learning. In short it is the cultivation of a systemwide culture of learning that will support change in assessment culture.

Foregrounding an international perspective, this paper proposes an assessment culture that moves away from a focus on judgement to a space in which progression and learning are prioritised. Aligning the purposes of education with the role and function of assessment is a critical consideration in ensuring integrity of educational experience. Simply asking 'who is the assessment activity for?' and 'what is its purpose?' can be powerful levers in inviting deliberation in this space. In this context IEAN members, recognising that assessment provides information for various stakeholders, offer an initial response to these questions which we feel should be paramount - 'for the child/student' and 'to support their learning'.

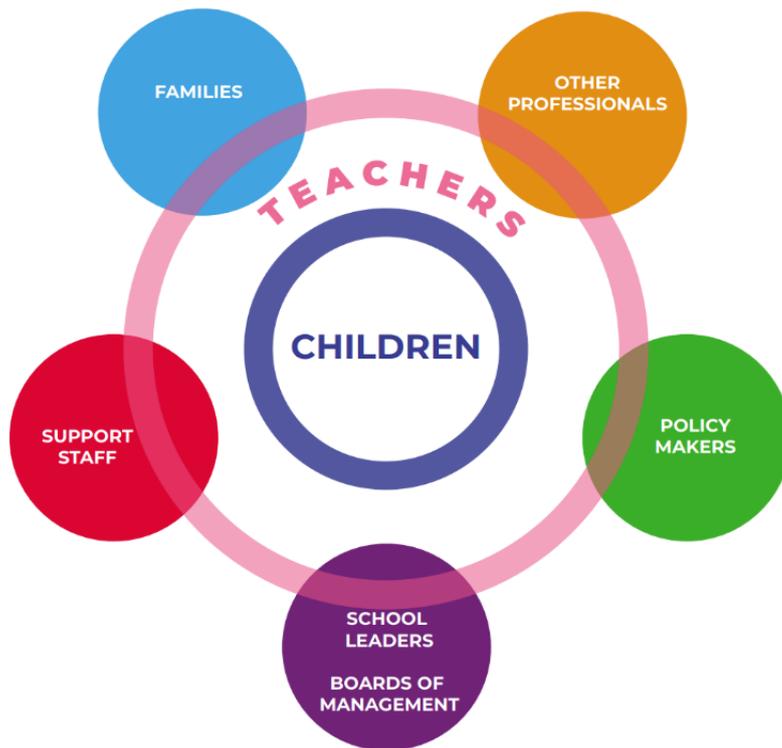


Figure 3- Stakeholders for whom assessment provides information (NCCA, 2020, p. 25)

The process of continually supporting assessment culture outlined in this paper necessitates an engagement with an individual’s sense of identity, which includes beliefs, values and emotional connection. Changing assessment culture then requires engagement with notions of uncertainty, loss, letting go, rationalising, relearning and growth. IEAN members posit that in complex education systems where change is ubiquitous, a culture of ‘learning’ has to be a defining feature of professional practice across all layers. This culture sets the conditions in which teachers are empowered to modify their practice and make professional decisions in an effort to maintain alignment between the purposes of education and assessment.

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