Assessment for learning: An Australian study in middle schooling

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Assessment for learning has been widely reported as a reform in educational assessment. The recently published OECD study (OECD, 2005) provided several case study investigations of how assessment for learning is variously enacted in diverse policy and system contexts. In this paper we take up the topic of assessment for learning and draw on a recently completed large-scale study of teacher capacity-building in assessment in middle schooling (Years 4 to 9; ages 8 to 14 approx.) to explore characteristics of 'assessment as critical inquiry'. Specifically, we probe the question, *How can we enact a framework of assessment as critical inquiry for improving learning outcomes?* The paper proposes a conceptual framing for developing a professional mindset that places assessment at the heart of the pedagogic enterprise.

Introduction

Teachers face competing demands in their classrooms. On the one hand, there are the imperatives to establish connections between in-school and out-of-school knowledges, ensuring that school activities are relevant to the demands of the larger world (Cumming et al, 2001). On the other hand, as McClay (2002) highlighted, there is increasing downward pressure to demonstrate quality assurance and adopt narrow forms of assessment that stifle wide-ranging development. This situation has been exacerbated by the continued silence in assessment theory and research on the matter of how 'critical pedagogy' "can be 'done' in the course of managing the interactions between assessment and classroom learning" (Morgan & Wyatt-Smith, 2000, pp. 123-124). In short, what has not been established is how liberal pedagogic practices that encourage teachers and students to develop critical consciousness in learning and pedagogy can articulate with assessment. Also not established in empirical research to date is how students can be supported to meet the literacy demands always and inevitably at play in assessment activities.

The issue in this paper is not to argue the strengths (and limitations) of attempts at critical-cultural approaches to pedagogy[1]. Instead, the aim is to explore what a framework for assessing student achievement might extend to if it were to aim for congruence with critical pedagogic practices (Gee, 1990; Street, 1995, 1997; Barton and Hamilton, 2000). The challenge therefore is to develop a framework that situates assessment alongside concepts of critical inquiry and achievement, while taking a sharp focus on the literacy demands of assessment, known to impact the quality of student outcomes.

Foundational to such a framework is the standpoint that quality assessment is central to learning and learning improvement. Assessment provides data that informs teacher judgements about student performance. However, when focussing on student learning and equity one must ask which type/s of assessment and for which purposes? One must also ask if and how critical approaches can support a dynamic view of the relationship between learning, pedagogy and assessment. In what follows first, we sketch in the background for a large-scale teacher capacity-building project, *The 2005 Queensland Project for Literacy and Numeracy in the Middle Years of Schooling Initiative Strand A* funded by the Australian

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[1] Readers interested in these matters as they relate to general pedagogy and educational reform are advised to see Lingard and Mills (2003), Zeichner (1993), Freire (1998), Cochran-Smith (1991), Giroux (1985). Readers interested in these matters as they relate to literacy are advised to see Baynham and Prinsloo (2001), Barton (2001), Comber and Hill (2000) and Street (1997).

Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). Then we outline the framework for assessment as critical inquiry implemented during the project.

Background

The last two decades have been marked by numerous calls for new ways of assessing. In global discourses of education reform that have been influential in the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries including Japan for some years, there is support for a move to assessment-led reform in schooling by promoting the idea that such reform is key to addressing social disadvantage by providing quality education for all. Studies of assessment have shown increasing interest in how classroom assessment can be used to improve the learning experiences of students. As reviews of assessment and learning by Natriello (1987), Crooks (1988), and most recently by Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b) make clear, the link between improved classroom assessment and the improvement of learning has been the subject of study by researchers from a variety of theoretical positions on teaching and learning. The diversity of studies reported in the reviews mentioned above show how the notion of instruction and improved learning as requiring quality feedback is not restricted to a particular theoretical orientation (Morgan & Wyatt-Smith, 2000).

Sadler's (1989, 1998) work on 'formative assessment' provided a model for teaching-learning-assessment practice that shows how improvement follows when students are empowered with assessment knowledge and expertise. In this way, it provides an opportunity for dialogue with critical pedagogy viewpoints about student empowerment and learning. From Sadler's formative assessment position, the teacher's ethical practice and hence, authority as master, follows a guild model with students taking on the role of apprentices. For this to be realised in practice, the teacher must possess first, a concept of quality appropriate to the task and the student group; second, an ability to judge the student's work in relation to that concept and a desire to induct student-apprentices into the appraisal process; and third, a history of evaluative decision-making developed over time. Moreover, it depends on a critical ability and willingness to facilitate students' transition from feedback to self-monitoring. For this to occur, the teacher must already possess the knowledge of what constitutes quality and must value opportunities for sharing this knowledge. The teacher must also provide a teaching-learning context that meets what Sadler describes as three indispensable conditions for improvement. These are:

that *the student* comes to hold a concept of quality roughly similar to that held by the teacher, is able to monitor continuously the quality of what is being produced *during the act of production itself*, and has a repertoire of alternative moves or strategies from which to draw at any given point. (Sadler, 1989, p. 121; emphasis in the original)

This extract makes clear Sadler's concern with 'control during production', and for this to be realised the three conditions must be met simultaneously; they are not sequential steps. Linking to these preconditions is a suite of issues about professional learning needs that also have been identified from recent Australian research findings and policy initiatives.

Of relevance to the Australian context and the Queensland project is the *Beyond the Middle* (DEST, 2002) report that identified how middle years initiatives for target groups are driven by a developmentalist philosophy ('adolescence as a psychologically troubled time') that fails to respond to growing diversity in the student population. Also reported was a proliferation of remediation programs rather than programs that address curriculum, literacy and numeracy demands that students face in learning, and mainstream pedagogy. In developing this further, the report identified the "virtual disappearance of literacy across the curriculum" (p. 42).

Further findings included the need for an emphasis on higher order thinking, critical literacy, greater depth of knowledge and understanding, and increased overall intellectual demand and expectations of middle years students (p. 8). Assessment and reporting were identified as key elements of effective teaching and learning. They were also seen as the principle levers in addressing issues of accountability, curriculum reform and improved student outcomes (p. 97). The report called for more systematic advice to be provided to Australian schools on the best uses of standardised testing and other forms of assessment in literacy and numeracy to inform curriculum and teaching.

Also relevant are research findings on curriculum literacies (Cumming, Wyatt-Smith, Ryan & Doig, 1998; Cumming & Wyatt-Smith, 2001; Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2001, 2003), including the literacies of Mathematics, together with additional insights from the *Beyond the Middle* (DEST, 2002), in particular the finding that the teaching of such literacies was not apparent in any of the programs reviewed nationally. The notion of curriculum literacies is expanded upon below. Essentially, literacies in the curriculum, or curriculum

literacies, are those literate capabilities needed to learn in the curriculum. If these literacy demands are left implicit and not taught explicitly, they provide barriers to learning (Cumming & Wyatt-Smith, 2001; Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2001, 2003).

Consistent with the points above, the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) (Education Queensland, 2001) identified that professional learning needs to engage practitioners in substantive conversations about the link between pedagogy and student outcomes and to be about building a sense of responsibility and efficacy for student learning. Similarly, Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie (2003, p. 131) differentiated between effective professional learning communities that support a strong service ethic reflected in high expectations for student success and other communities of practice where low expectations of and aspirations for student achievements impact on what can be achieved. Further, the *Making Better Connections* (DEST, 2001) report recommended that professional learning be: sustained, ongoing and intensive, and supported by modelling, coaching and collective problem solving around specific issues of practice. Against this background, we propose that the profession is ready to go beyond the old dualism of assessment for measurement and assessment for learning improvement, and to engage instead with the notion of assessment as critical inquiry. This move opens up possibilities for aligning curriculum, pedagogy and assessment giving priority to teacher agency in improvement.

Proposing a framework for enacting assessment as critical inquiry

Delandshere's (2002) notion of 'assessment as inquiry' highlighted how "the call for change in assessment follows an almost unanimous recognition of the limitations of current measurement theory and practice" (p. 1461). In responding to Delandshere's call and to Sadler's orientation towards student empowerment, we propose a four-part framework for enacting assessment as critical inquiry. Essentially, the proposition put forward is that when assessment is understood as critical inquiry, the practices and processes of assessing - social and cultural acts of doing assessment in actual contexts - can be considered in relation to four main lenses as illustrated in Figure 1 below:

1) the nature of the knowledges and capabilities that are to be assessed;
2) the alignments between assessment, learning and teaching as these relate to assessment requirements;
3) the enactment of teacher judgement; and
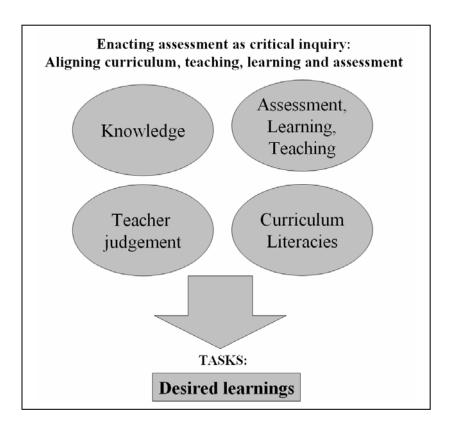4) the literacy demands of assessment requirements.

Figure 1: Enacting Assessment as Critical Inquiry

Each of the four elements represented as 'bubbles' can be thought of as a lens that enables particular characteristics of enacted assessment to come to the fore. Collectively, the set of four lenses work to reveal what is at play in how student achievement is evaluated and therefore valued. Focussing the dynamic interaction of these four elements is task design. The pedagogic outcome of the framework is desired learnings which should articulate into improved outcomes for students. In this way the framework has clear implications for identifying and examining the practices used to establish how quality is judged and reported. It is relevant to large-scale assessment programs installed by systems, as well as assessment that teachers undertake in classrooms to determine progress and to judge achievement.

The focus is on identifying and examining the suite of conceptions, values, and assumptions at play in decisions about ways of doing assessment. The proposed framework is prompted by the lack of a general theoretical position that connects assessment to meaning making (Delandshere, 2002), including concepts of knowledge, learning, and language.

In what follows, first, these four elements are discussed as components of a framework for enacting assessment as critical inquiry. The framework is a construct on our part and has been developed as a way to map and explore the complexities inherent in curricular-pedagogic-assessment practices in diverse pedagogic and geographic contexts. Second, we draw on the conceptual development of a recent state-wide project to explore the application of the framework to practice. A key aim of the project was that planning for assessment, learning and teaching be seen as a dynamic, recursive and flexible process. Assessment tasks and the units in which they were embedded were collaboratively planned – across sectors and across sites. As such, the view taken of assessment was 'formative' in the key relationship between assessment, pedagogy and learning needs. This view was adopted in the recent OECD (2005) studies whereby "formative assessment refers to frequent, interactive assessments of student progress and understanding to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately" (p. 21). The proposed framework for assessment as critical inquiry is founded on the essential nexus between teaching and assessment that situates the teacher at the centre of the pedagogic enterprise.

Lens 1: Knowledges

This lens brings to the fore conceptions of knowledge, and the assumptions made about the nature of valued knowledge and learning that inevitably underpin acts of assessment. Despite the influence of such undergirding conceptions, their operation in and influence over what comes to count as assessment evidence is rarely acknowledged. More than a decade ago, Gill (1993) made this observation, claiming that "Among the many and various articles and books on the quality and direction of American education, one searches in vain for an in-depth discussion of how knowing takes place, of who knowers are, and of what can be known" (p.1). Drawing on this observation, Delandshere (2002) made the strong statement that:

> Until we come to grips with, or at least frame the issue of, knowledge and knowing in ways that can guide education practices (including assessment), the enterprise of education runs the risk of being fruitless and counterproductive. In its current state, assessment appears to be a process of collecting data about phenomena or constructs that we have not adequately defined, to answer questions that we have not articulated, and on the basis of which we draw inferences about the quality of the education system. (p. 1462)

Essentially, Delandshere's argument is that there is some urgency in reconnecting assessment and more generally, educational practices to theoretical considerations as a means of clarifying assumptions made about what counts as valued knowledge, and therefore what should be provided for students in the name of quality teaching and learning. These two related matters raise a suite of issues around how knowledges, and more specifically curricular knowledges, are conceptualised and how different conceptualisations lead to quite different assessment possibilities for students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

In the assessment-capacity building project referred to earlier, participating teachers were asked to interrogate and verify the suitability of their assumptions about students' prior knowledges and capabilities as these relate to both curriculum and literacy. They had to review earlier assumptions about student readiness to proceed and how these assumptions had impacted upon performance levels as well as what would be realistically attainable goals for learning. The teachers critically deconstructed the task demands so as to focus realistically attainable goals. Teachers reflected critically upon the implicit knowledge they bring to curriculum planning. This included not only raising awareness in terms of the students' prior knowledge but also in terms of the physical and cultural resources of the community in which the school is located, and how this can inform efforts to connect students' in-school to out-of-school learning. While the impact of the critical pedagogy movement has been felt at the intellectual level or 'inside the head' level, project teachers were asked to discuss and evaluate their understanding that teachers as social beings bring their personal, socio-cultural context to classroom interactions.

Second, the project worked from the premise that knowing the learning domain and relevant syllabus materials are foundational to planning and effective practice. While this may seem self-evident to good practice, in a period of reform and change, time to critically reflect on the knowledge demands of units of work is often felt by teachers to be an academic luxury when faced with the challenges of daily operation. Project teachers were supported in collaborative networks with additional time dedicated to focussed and critical planning which worked to support efforts to 'unclutter' the curriculum. By critically interrogating task demands through the application of assessment criteria and standards, teachers were asked to openly question whether they were assessing 'knowledge', 'skills' or 'literacy'. Project

teachers were asked to develop locally relevant standards specifications, all the while critically reflecting on issues such as task complexity and knowledge demands.

Project teachers were asked to re-evaluate the nature of knowledge and its relationship to assessment. This first lens of the framework highlighted a need to understand the relationship between curricula; the socio-cultural contexts of members of the classroom; and the knowledges and capabilities to be assessed. This leads to further examination of the second lens of the framework for assessment as critical inquiry - the relationship between assessment, learning and teaching.

Lens 2: Linking assessment, learning and teaching

In the last two decades, studies of assessment have shown increasing interest in how classroom assessment can be used to improve the learning experiences and outcomes of students. More specifically, the emphasis in educational assessment reform has increasingly been on meaningful, contextualised and purposeful activity which focus on demonstrations of what students know and can achieve, rather on students' shortfalls in knowledge and failure to achieve (Cumming & Maxwell, 1999; Gipps, 1994). Essentially, assessment has been re-framed in relation to its role in a learning culture (Shepard, 2000).

Key to reshaping project teachers' conceptualisation of assessment was the issue of 'front-ending' assessment. The underpinning belief was that being explicit about assessment expectations would have a focussing effect on pedagogy, facilitating deeper student learning. A term adopted for this was 'backward mapping' whereby the planned, culminating tasks for assessment were critically analysed to identify the explicit skills and knowledges that needed to be built into the unit planning. This conceptualisation of assessment as a driver for curriculum design has been trialled in Science curriculum research at the University of Michigan with their 'assessment-driven design process' labelled 'backward design' (Harris, McNeill, Lizotte, Marx, & Krajcik, 2003). The project departed from the Michigan work in trialling the method across all curriculum areas in middle schooling.

More specifically, the notion of backward mapping was applied by middle schooling teachers across curriculum domains such Mathematics, literacy, Science and Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) as well as in units designed as integrated studies. The teachers employed backward mapping to place the unit assessment task/s at the heart of

planning. Planning teams critically evaluated the proposed formative and summative tasks when planning the unit. This evaluative process required deconstructing the knowledges, curriculum literacies and potential blockers for students at educational risk. The aim was to provide a focussing, consciousness-raising effect upon pedagogy through the analysis of the assessment demands of the task/s. The desired effect was for an improvement in students' engagement. Readers interested in project outcomes are directed to the Evaluation Report (Wyatt-Smith & Bridges, forthcoming).

While the use of stated assessment criteria and standards to facilitate teacher and student conversations about quality and learning has been common practice in the Senior years of schooling in Queensland, this has not been routine practice for teachers in Years 1 to 10. In recognising this, a set of reflective questions about the features of quality assessment was developed (see Appendix A). In part, this was motivated by an interested in enabling teachers to probe for themselves the demands of assessments that they developed for classroom use. More specifically, the questions enabled teachers to focus on 'backward mapping'. This process then provided a principled basis for teacher dialogues regarding the quality of student work.

Lens 3: Teacher judgement linked to standards

Central to our proposal for a critical inquiry approach to assessment is the understanding that teacher judgement is taken to be nested within a range of decision-making relating to curriculum frameworks, assessment practices, the school-community interface, and individual student learning needs and goals, as suggested earlier. Beyond this is the principle that teachers and students are active in gathering information about and reflecting on learning and performance over time. Generally speaking, there is support for this position in the field of educational assessment research. Sadler (1998) argued that there is strong support for the view that standards can be productive in informing not only judgement, but also teaching and learning. Stigler & Hiebert (1997) presented the cautionary note that a focus on standards and accountability that ignores the processes of teaching and learning in classrooms will not provide the direction that teachers need in their quest to improve. Even though judgement is a routine part of each teacher's work, it is difficult to subject it to scrutiny, even by the individual teacher concerned, unless scaffolded opportunities are provided to do so (Phelps, 1989). Studies of teacher judgement have shown that individual teachers carry with them not only evaluative experience, but more specifically, their own judgement policies that typically

remain private, though they work to shape in powerful ways the processes by which judgements of quality are arrived at (Wyatt-Smith, Castleton, Freebody & Cooksey, 2003). Moreover, operating in these policies can be valuation practices that are as much tied to recollected observations of in-class learning and behaviours, as to the qualities of the piece to be assessed.

A way forward is to recognize that *teacher judgement* in conjunction with *clearly specified standards* and *moderation opportunities* are a linchpin of a robust assessment culture in schooling. The project aimed to support sustained professional conversations around matters including planning for assessment; how assessment activities are designed; how evidence is collected, interpreted, and recorded; what contexts are suitable for undertaking particular assessment activities; and what standards are in place to assist teachers in assessing quality. Such conversations were seen as enabling judgement practices to be de-privatised, and judgements made defensible. This can be achieved when judgement practices involve a process of matching work samples to stated assessment standards, with attention focusing on the features or qualities of performance as these were evidenced in the work.

Teacher judgement can therefore be understood as evidence-based, with standards playing a useful function in informing, substantiating and making judgements defensible. Sadler (1987) distinguished the practice of standards-referenced assessment from the practice of relying on direct inter-student comparison as the basis for judgement, arguing that standards can be a fixed marker for tracking long-term changes. Given the increasing education policy priority surrounding system access to 'transparent' assessment information, there is no doubt that evidence-based judgements of achievement, measured against standards – and evidence of how such judgements meet the requirements for validity and reliability – are critical to continuing community confidence in schooling education. More than this, however, the challenges facing teachers charged with working with stated standards is to situate them in their classroom practice, and in so doing, take account of their school-community context.

Lens 4: Curriculum literacies

This fourth lens draws on a new conceptualisation of the literacy-curriculum interface that emerged from a national study of the literacy demands of curriculum in senior schooling (Cumming et al, 1998; Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2001, 2003). The researchers developed

the term 'curriculum literacies', where 'curriculum' is deliberately used as a noun, rather than the adjectival 'curricular', to demonstrate that this conjunction represents the interface between a specific curriculum and its literacies, rather than literacies related to curriculum in a generic sense, or a single literacy that can be spread homogeneously across the curriculum'. Building on this work, Wyatt-Smith and Cumming (2003) argued the need for exploring the coherence of literacy demands that students encounter in managing their learning in different contexts and the need to incorporate these demands explicitly in instruction and assessment. Their reconceptualisation of curriculum literacies challenges current constructs of assessment and calls for the domains of assessment to be expanded to include both curriculum knowledge and epistemological domains that take account of diverse ways of working with and in semiotic systems. In a framework of assessment as critical inquiry, curriculum literacies is therefore central. It is this lens that focuses attention on the success (or failure) of systems as well as pedagogical and assessment practices to enable students to gain increasing control of this combination of curricular and literate knowledges and ability to use these productively.

Project teachers were asked to examine notions of literacy in refocussing curriculum and assessment planning. Essential to the process was the strong recognition that teachers needed to explicitly teach the literacy demands of assessment requirements and to provide a meta-language for students to use in furthering their own understandings of the literacy demands of the tasks. While many had a 'broad' understanding of the literacy demands of their curriculum area/s, a critical unpacking of these demands when designing assessment tasks was not a routine, familiar practice.

Conclusion

As noted in the introduction, assessment policy and practice in schooling is being challenged to review the nature of the knowledges and skills being assessed. Also opening for review is the optimum range of contexts and conditions for collecting assessment information about how students work with and reconstitute knowledges. These two related questions raise a suite of issues around how curricular knowledges are conceptualised and how different conceptualisations lead to quite different assessment possibilities for students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

In these reconfigured relations, the teacher's claim to expertise may be tied primarily to how they promote both quality learning and the qualities of learners so that learning will

increasingly be about creating a kind of person, with kinds of dispositions and orientations to the world and to ways of working with and reconstituting knowledge as problem-solvers and collaborators. The reality is that while many teachers have initiated their own professional conversations around assessment practice, both within their school and at district level, it is also fair to say that many teachers experience a sense of isolation as they go about their work as assessors, having no sustained opportunities for such sharing. A related observation is that the provision and proliferation of outcomes, in themselves, do not secure reliable judgements in which teachers and the community can have confidence. There is a clear and pressing need for supporting teacher dialogue around the issues of judgement, including standard setting, and how to make available for students useful information about expectations of quality.

This paper has opened up some of the complexities that can be considered when critically inquiring into educational assessment. It has proposed a framework for assessment as critical inquiry through which to inquire into realising the interactivity of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as foundational elements for quality learning. At one level the framework represents an attempt to see educational assessment in terms of its connectedness to issues of meaning: knowing, learning, teaching, and language. At another level, it is a provocation to reconsider the divergent assessment priorities and goals of the various education stakeholders in Australia and the pressure on some to follow short-term imperatives of appearing to be delivering improved results. Deep learning and improvement take time, however. They also involve new conversations around what is to be valued both in classroom-based and system assessment policies and practices. The challenge for the educational community is to be supportive of those assessment initiatives that focus on providing support for the long-term professional development necessary to effect change and deliver improved outcomes. As teachers know only too well, assessment procedures, of themselves, do not necessarily lead to improvement. Instead, teachers' professional knowledge and judgement practices are central, if we are serious about moves to improve student learning.

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Developing Quality Assessment Opportunities
(Wyatt-Smith, 2006)

Feature 1: Alignment

- How is the assessment opportunity/task aligned with the formal curriculum and intended learning?
- Is the task to be designed for a single learning area, or is it transdisiplinary, drawing on two or more learning areas?
- When is the assessment opportunity best scheduled in the teaching-learning year?
- How does the assessment require students to carry forward and build on prior learning? Does it enable students to demonstrate how they are connecting prior learning to current learning at a particular point in time?

Feature 2: Intellectual challenge and engagement

- What knowledges (from a field of knowledge/learning area or across fields/learning areas) will students be involved in accessing, using, and creating?
- What prior knowledges, skills, and strategies are necessary for students to engage with the task? (In the absence of this, the assessment may build in student failure from the beginning.)
- What are the dimensions or aspects of the task? Does it involve students in: locating, retrieving and re-presenting information; problem-solving; taking action; making a presentation to an audience? What are the cognitive, aesthetic, creative, and critical aspects?
- Will students see the assessment task as worthwhile, and as having relevance to them? For example, does the task connect to the communities of practice that students identify with outside school? These could be actual communities, as well as virtual communities, including those participating in particular blogs, online chat rooms and game playing, for example.
- What outside school knowledge and experiences may influence how boys and girls engage with the task?

Feature 3: Assessment scope and demand

- What is the level of demand of the task? Is the task designed in such a way as to enable a heterogeneous group of students to achieve success at different levels? Is the task to be designed to meet a minimum requirement for success?

- Does the task build in the opportunity for the teacher to discriminate among performances at different levels?

Feature 4: Language used to communicate the task

- Is the task to be written/presented in ways that draw appropriately on the accepted terminology of the learning area/s?
- Is the wording used to present the task to students free of gender-bias?
- Is the language (be it written, spoken, visual) clear and accessible to all students, taking account of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds?
- What, if any, prerequisite cultural and linguistic knowledges are called on to access the intended meaning of the task?

Feature 5: Literate capabilities involved in doing and completing the task

- What curriculum literacies are being assessed? (How can these be made explicit for students, and taught to them?)
- What are the modes that students need to use to engage with the task? For example, will students be accessing and using written, visual, auditory language as they progress through the task?
- Will the final product involve students in working in one mode (writing, for example), or will they be working multimodally, both within and across modes (e.g. combining written, visual language, and auditory language)?
- Will they need to use any digital technologies to succeed at the task (e.g. the Internet; computer-based programs; cameras)?

Feature 6: Performance contexts

- Does the task have any connection to students' outside school experiences? If so, are the conditions for doing the school task simulating the conditions that students experience outside of school in a similar or related activity?
- Will students be working individually, in pairs or in small groups? (Monitoring of how students work with peers can be an important part of formative assessment.)
- What resources, human and material, will they need to access to do the task?
- Will these resources be available and accessed at school, during school time?
- Will some additional resources need to be accessed outside school?
- How much time is needed to complete the task successfully?
- Will work-in-progress be shared with the teacher, and/or with peers, for feedback purposes?

Developing Quality Assessment Opportunities (cont)

Feature 7: Knowing what is expected both during and on completion of the task

- What information is provided to students about how to progress through the task, checking for example, on use of resources and time?
- What access do students have to information about how the quality of what they do is to be judged? *Standards descriptions,* as discussed next, as well as *exemplars* showing how the requirements of standards have been met are both useful to convey to students information about the desired features of performance.

Feature 8: Student self-assessment for improvement

- How are expectations of quality communicated to students?
- How are students enabled to monitor their progress – including time management and resource management?
- How are students enabled to monitor the quality of their work during production? (By what means will students know i) what; and ii) how to improve?)
- Taking account of age and year level, what practices will be put in place to enable students to determine the overall quality of their work once completed? (*e.g. For students in the early years, standards can be communicated orally as part of teacher-led classroom conversations about quality, with authentic student-generated exemplars showing the type of work students are to produce, being useful. For students beyond the early years, explicitly defined or stated standards are informing, especially when students play an active role in developing these.*)

Feature 9: Intended purposes of assessment information

- What is the intended use of the assessment information generated by the task? Is it i) primarily formative purposes (for improving student learning); or ii) primarily summative purposes (for reporting student achievement); or is it possible that the information may serve both formative and summative purposes?