

Four Assessment Capabilities:

What they are and why our children would want their teachers to have them?

Chris DeLuca (Canada), Jill Willis (Australia), Bronwen Cowie (New Zealand) and Chris Harrison (England).



Preparing Assessment Capable Teachers: A Global Need



Preparing Assessment Capable Teachers: A Global Need

Over the past 20 years: increase in accountability mandates and assessment in schools

- Proliferation of large-scale assessment (Jang & Sinclair, 2018)

- Assessment-informed teaching to support, monitor, and report on learning

Teachers generally maintain low levels of assessment knowledge and skills, with beginning teachers particularly feeling under prepared (Bennett, 2011; Herppich et al., 2018; Looney et al., 2018)

Teachers' approaches to assessment appear to change over their initial years of teaching toward more summative orientations (Coombs et al., 2018) in some contexts.

Differences and similarities in assessment cultures in 4 countries



Quick poll

This image is from a video by an Australian university promoting teaching courses.

Poll 1 : How similar is this picture to the assessment culture your new teachers experience now?

- a. Looks very similar
- b. Looks a little bit similar
- c. Not very similar
- d. No similarities here

Preparing Assessment Capable Teachers: For what was, what is and what is yet to come



Quick poll

Poll 2 : How ready are new teachers in your context for assessment that is to come?

- a. Already there
- b. Somewhat ready
- c. Not very ready
- d. Not even on the horizon

4 data sources: policies, programs, survey, reflections

ORIGINAL RESEARCH article

Front. Educ., 26 November 2019 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00132>



Download
Article



Export citation

Policies, Programs, and Practices: Exploring the Complex Dynamics of Assessment Education in Teacher Education Across Four Countries

3,954
TOTAL VIEWS



Suggest a Research Topic >

EDITED BY

Yueting Xu
Guangdong University of Foreign
Studies, China

REVIEWED BY

Wei Shin Leong
Ministry of Education (Singapore),
Singapore

Simon F. Child

Christopher DeLuca^{1†}, **Jill Willis**^{2†}, **Bronwen Cowie**^{3†}, **Christine Harrison**^{4†}, **Andrew Coombs**^{1†}, **Andrew Gibson**^{2†} and **Suzanne Trask**^{3†}

¹Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, ON, Canada

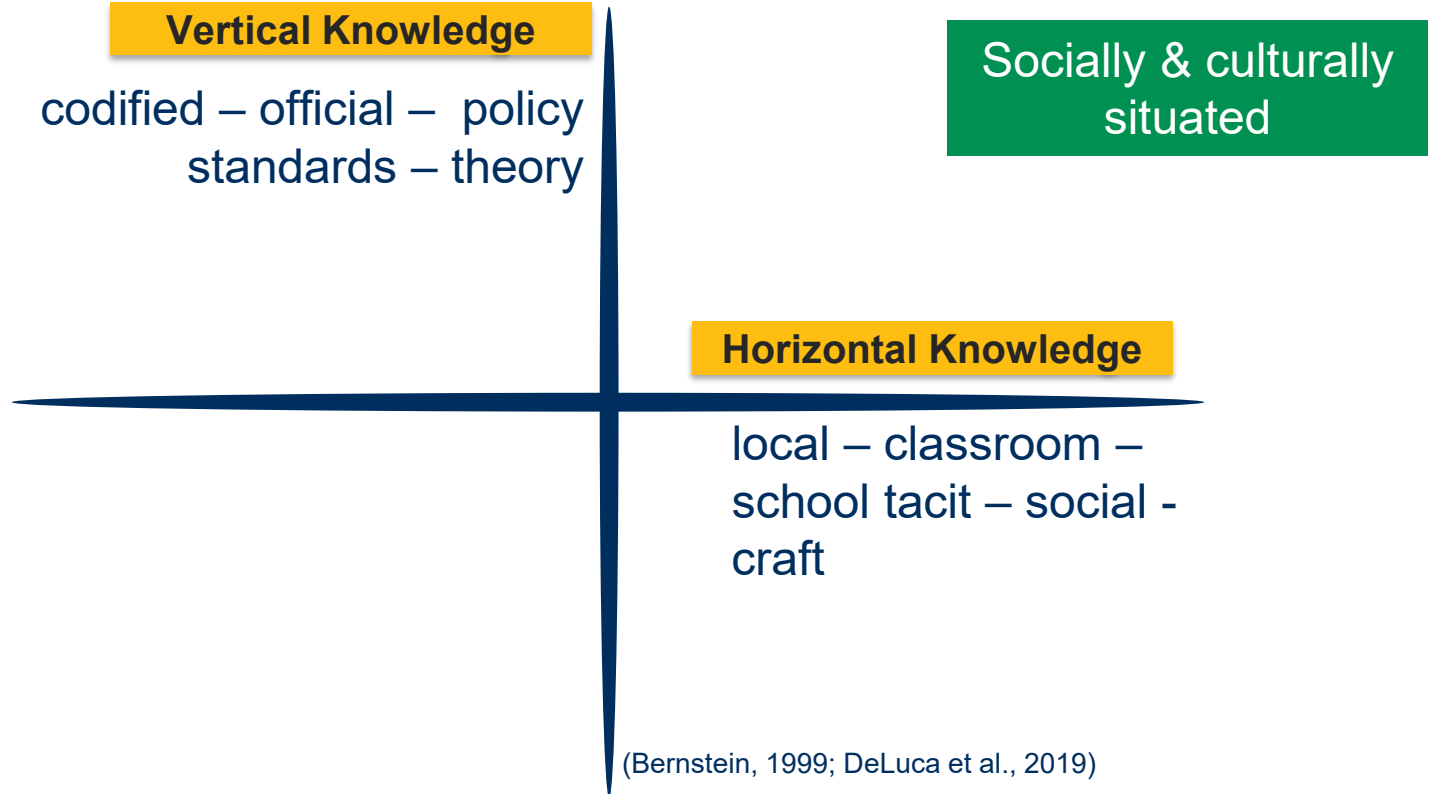
²Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

³Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

⁴School of Education, Communication, and Society, King's College London, London, United Kingdom

There has been a global trend toward increased accountability and assessment in schools over the past several decades. Across policy and professional standards, teachers have been repeatedly

Learning to Assess



Similarities



Historical colonial
relationships



Teachers active in student
assessment



Some externally designed & administered testing (senior years) plus, expectations that teachers design assessments and make assessment decisions.



Teacher assessment preparation occurs in Universities, supported by teacher educators and mentor teachers



Tension between accountability emphasis and students need to be prepared to think the unthinkable as we face global insecurities and unknown futures

Differences

Assessment as separate from or embedded in teaching/learning cycle

92.6%

Australia

54.5%

England

33.5%

Canada

25.7%

New Zealand

- Based on course outline content representation
- Lower percentage indicates that assessment was featured as its own topic of study

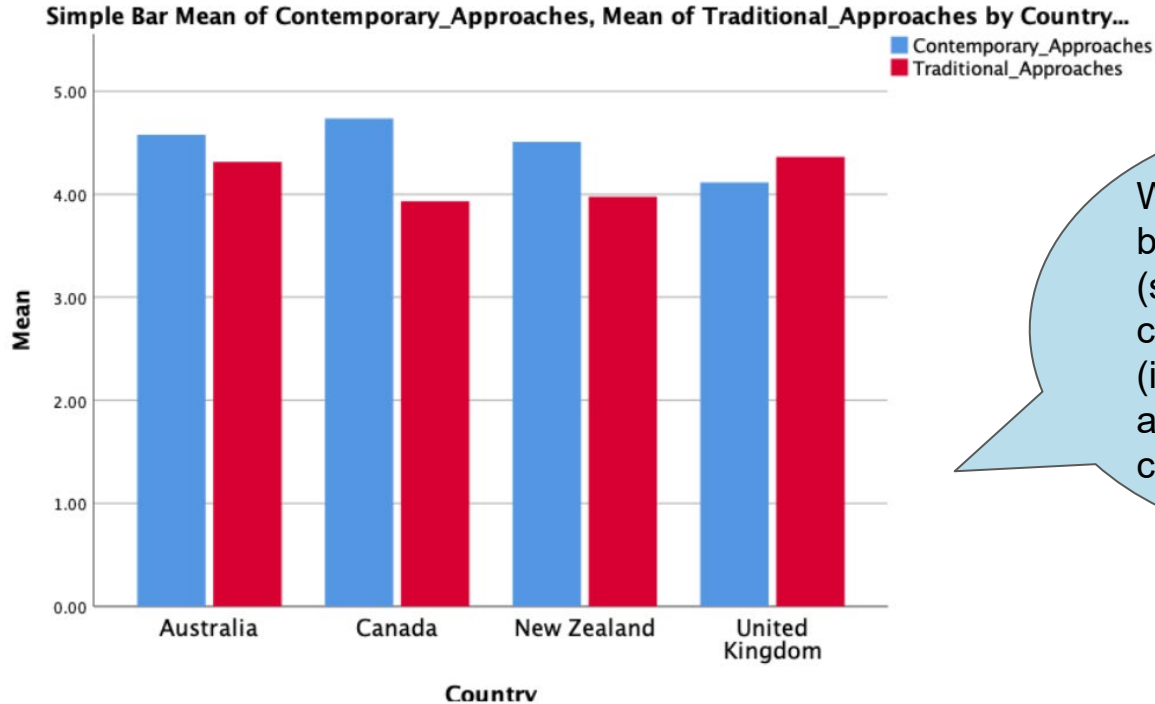
Differences - Standardization and Accountability

Standardized assessment a focus in **England**

Accountability in Australia was about reporting to parents

A lower emphasis on accountability in **Canada** and **New Zealand** was balanced out by a higher emphasis on student diversity and differentiation

ACAI survey results



What is the balance between traditional (standardized) and contemporary (individualised) approaches in your context?

Concepts of traditional and contemporary may not be enough...



Preparing Assessment Capable Teachers: What do we expect?

Shaping teacher candidates' attitudes towards assessment

*"[Having teacher candidates] recognize that all assessment is subjective, and to embrace that and use that as a way to **differentiate the assessment** for different students"*

*"We want them to be able to identify and reflect on their **beliefs** and understandings of our assessment"*

Developing teacher candidates' assessment practices

*"I want them to be able to effectively **create assessment tools** that align with good assessment practices"*

*"I want them to show me how they're understanding those practices, giving me examples of where they've used those practices, and then analyzing for me how those practices are going to inform their **pedagogical decision making**"*

I'm feeling very conflicted.... The scientist in me weighs heavily on the side of reliability. But the social justice side of me is desperate for equity. Particularly because science itself as a discipline is far from equitable as it selects against women, minority groups, racial diversity... I'm keen to see that change and wonder if I could contribute to that in my high school science classes. I've been thinking a lot about equity and providing flexibility/choice in my assessment tasks for students (*preservice teacher reflection data*)



I'm feeling very conflicted.... The scientist in me weighs heavily on the side of reliability. But the social justice side of me is desperate for equity. Particularly because science itself as a discipline is far from equitable (selects against women, minority groups, racial diversity)... I'm keen to see that change and wonder if I could contribute to that in my high school science classes. I've been thinking a lot about equity and providing flexibility/choice in my assessment tasks for students.

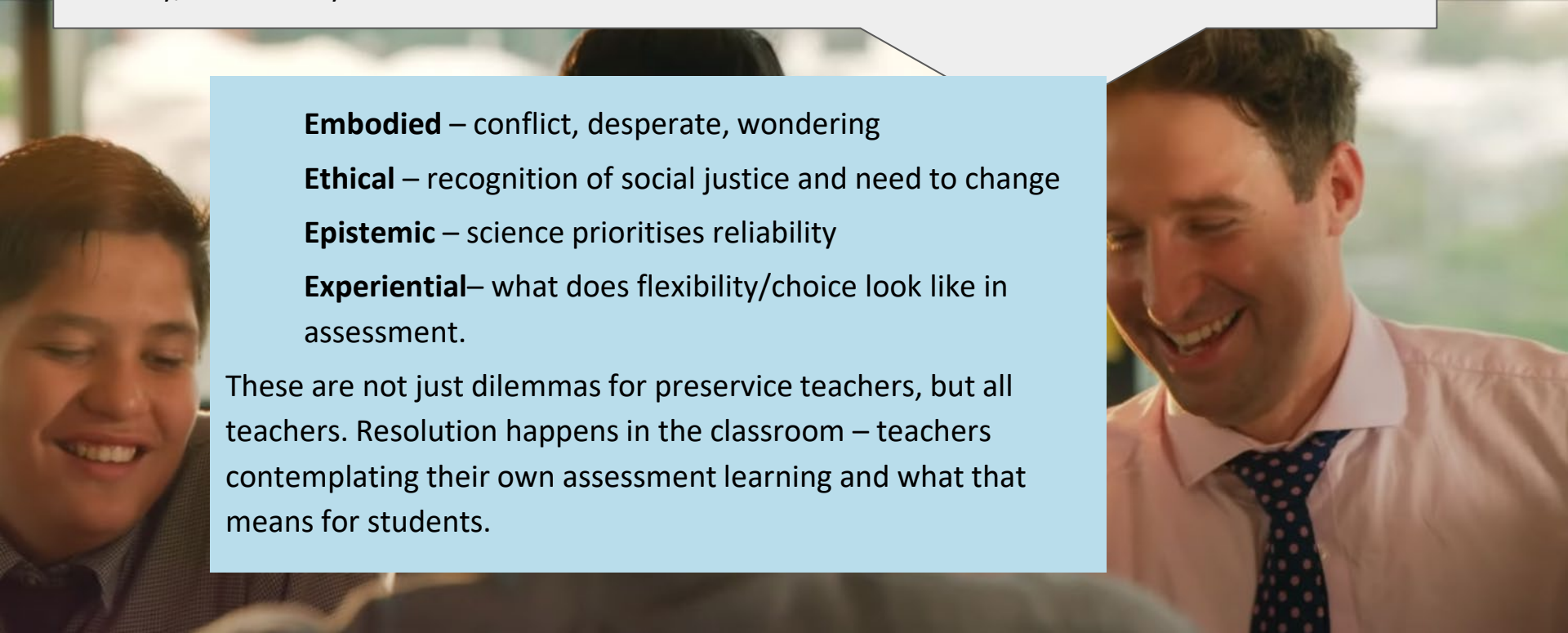
Embodied – conflict, desperate, wondering

Ethical – recognition of social justice and need to change

Epistemic – science prioritises reliability

Experiential– what does flexibility/choice look like in assessment.

These are not just dilemmas for preservice teachers, but all teachers. Resolution happens in the classroom – teachers contemplating their own assessment learning and what that means for students.



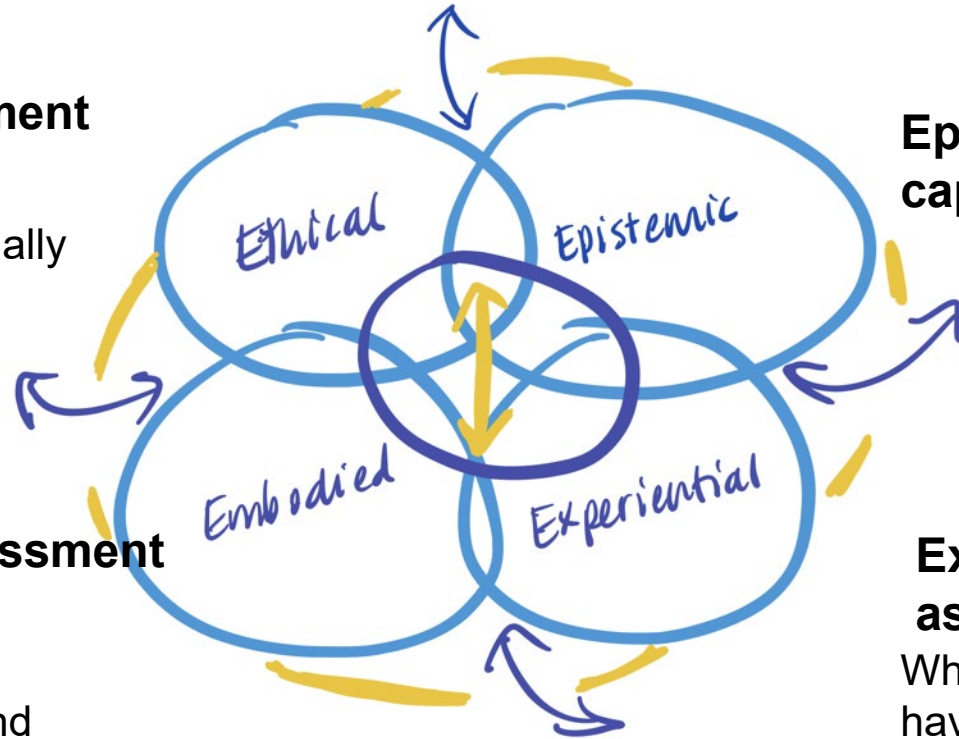
4 Assessment capacities

Ethical assessment capacity -

Is this fair and socially just?

Embodied assessment capacity -

What effects does this have on me and how do I deal with it?



Epistemic assessment capacity -

How am I making sense of assessment in the context of learning and knowing?

Experiential assessment capacity -

What events and practices have persuaded me to think this way? What am I able to do?

Embodied assessment capacity

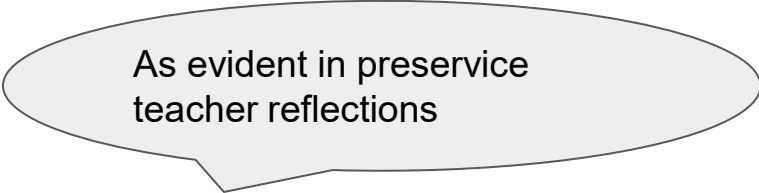
What effects does this have on me and how do I deal with it?

Assessment is an emotional activity for teachers and students. It involves wonder and worry. Traditional concepts of assessment have emphasised rational, emotion free measures of knowing.

- It is an ongoing capability involving bodies, minds, in assessment decision making in situ in sites (Charteris & Dargusch, 2018).
- “A dynamic and interactive teacher assessment identity constituted by beliefs, feelings, knowledge and skills” (Looney, Cumming, van Der Kliej & Harris, 2017, p. 14).



Embodied assessment capacity



As evident in preservice teacher reflections

Preservice teachers reflecting about their assessment learning frequently used embodied language like having to 'juggle' responsibilities, "scrambling to catch up", "still struggling to catch up with all the tasks" and "very behind in the work due to stopping to do the assignments. It hangs over my head."

- "I am struggling with the concepts of what classrooms should look and be like and comparing them to the environments I am currently in. I am finding it difficult to see how my voice could be heard in 'the machine' that you might call school. I am feeling quite inadequate... I am worried that I will let everyone down, the financial pressure is sometimes the more I learn the more I don't know. overwhelming, so much riding on this process. I am struggling to fit new opportunities I am facing and the conflict that brings with my beautiful family and the very full life that I already have".

Embodiment –mind in body and emotion – evident even in milder reflections:

- "I have been experimenting more with use of mini white boards and other assessment activities in class and I am becoming more confident in using this assessment in the lesson. I need to continue to work on planning my questioning before lessons to help students link idea to the objectives and prepare me for possible misconceptions. Planning is still taking much longer than I would like but I feel like I am starting to approach it more effectively and hope to start reducing the time it is taking."

Ethical assessment capacity

Is this fair ? Is it socially just? What are the implications for student and teacher identity?

Assessment should be of benefit *and* do no harm (Crooks, 1993). This foundational principle has become an increasing focus around the world as teachers come to understand more about the diversity of learners, and how assessment systems have excluded many students from opportunities to learn and demonstrate their learning.

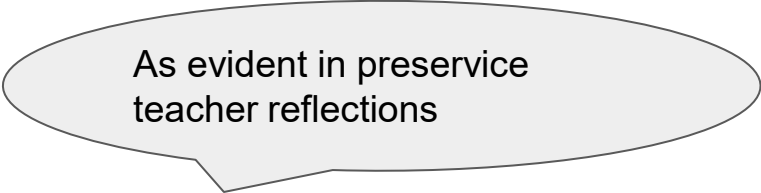
“[Assessment] is always about more than judging the achievement of learning outcomes for a given module or course. It is an act of communication about what we value.” (Boud, 2000, p. 160)

Assessment has the power create identities both as people and as learners (Stobart, 2005, p.71)

These ideas open up the need and possibilities for reshaping assessment at local and system levels.



Ethical assessment capacity



As evident in preservice teacher reflections

- There was one student, who is an ESL learner, did particularly poorly on the test. Despite having two periods to work on it, he only answered about half the questions on the test and he essentially got all the answers wrong. This situation made me think about how are we supposed to assess a student who does not fully understand spoken or written English, who is in a regular class. How can they learn science before they learn English? It is not fair to assess this student in their ability to do science when they don't have the English knowledge they need to be able to understand the question asked of them.
- The Indigenous peoples were valued through the hands-on, inquiry-based learning science curriculum in the school that investigated their cultural practices and how they can better understand and apply the significant contributions of the Indigenous peoples to Science. The assessment of energy transformation and forms, values the traditional ecological knowledges that have existed for thousands of years.

Epistemic assessment capacity

How am I making sense of assessment in the context of learning and knowing?

Assessment will always reflect assumptions about what is valued knowledge and how that knowledge can be expressed and evaluated?

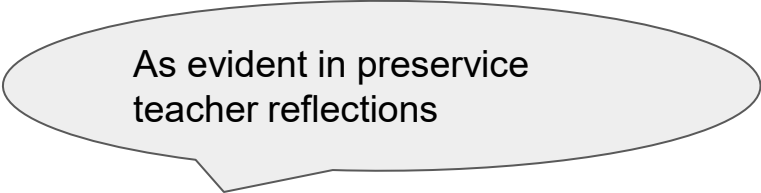
- Disciplinary differences influence assessment practices.
- Cultural knowledges and ways of learning are reflected in assessment.

*“Epistemology could be seen as driving assessments aimed at uncovering student knowledge, and driving pedagogy to build high quality knowledge to that end”
(Knight et al., 2007)*

- Negotiation of **personal & scientific** epistemologies
- Epistemological **diversity**
- Epistemological **curiosity and criticality**



Epistemic assessment capacity



As evident in preservice teacher reflections

- This week I was exposed to assessment learning in a Year 11 Drama class. The students are being assessed for a multimodal pitch showcasing a director's concept about an excerpt from the play Blackrock. My supervising teacher asked me to run a formative assessment task. In class, students divided into four groups of 4 and each group has a chart paper with 3 criteria scales laid out (Director's Concept, Digital Literacy, and Evaluation of Ideas, and Theory). Under each criteria area, there were the outcomes of each grade level cut out in pieces of paper mixed together. Each group had to work together to fit where each outcome should be placed along each criteria scale.
- 21st century skills (creativity, collaboration, innovation, etc.) are evident in the new maths assessment I am helping to teach with my supervising teacher; a portfolio of expenditure and savings for a trip to Bali on graduation – a real life example. The Torrance (2017) reading left me wondering how we can really assess all the qualities we want students to learn.

Experiential assessment capacity

What events and practices have persuaded me to think this way? What am I able to do?

New teachers are often confronted by classroom assessment events that don't fit with their ideals. Being able to identify experiences that have created some expectations, habits and assumptions can help teachers to evaluate whether these ideas are still fit for purpose, and from there to plan next steps for action.

- Judgments begin with a problematic experience, a fork in the road, which they attempt experimentally to resolve. Judgments gain intersubjective validity from assuming the standpoint of a "*sensus communis*, "a whole of common interests and purposes" (Dewey, 1985, p. 286).
- Candidates rely heavily on the mentorship of their associate teacher in aiding the development of their assessment literacy (Volante & Fazio, 2007).
- These liminal experimental periods may also have a transformative and renovational effect upon the larger culture, as new possibilities for human interactions are imagined, tested, and (perhaps) defined on a collective scale. past patterns of interaction are imaginatively recomposed to generate new future possibilities. (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).



Experiential assessment capacity

As evident in preservice teacher reflections

- I thought I knew the fundamental elements of assessment and how it could be implemented into classroom learning opportunities. But the issue was, that I knew that assessment tasks were beneficial, and I knew what activities would assist students in their learning but I didn't know how to incorporate these activities into engaging and stimulating learning practices.
- Yesterday I took over the class for the day because my Host Teacher was away for an illness. Each period came with its own set of challenges and rewards. First period, I was administering a practice listening test for the students to prepare for their real test next week. However, I struggled for the first 20 minutes of class trying to get my computer hooked up to the projector. They have a very complicated system at this school and that made it extra difficult. Luckily, I was able to get the students to read over the practice test while I was doing this, and I had them highlight any unknown words. Then once I was done getting everything ready, I had them share their unknown vocab words and I made sure they knew what all the questions meant before starting the quiz.

Quick poll 3

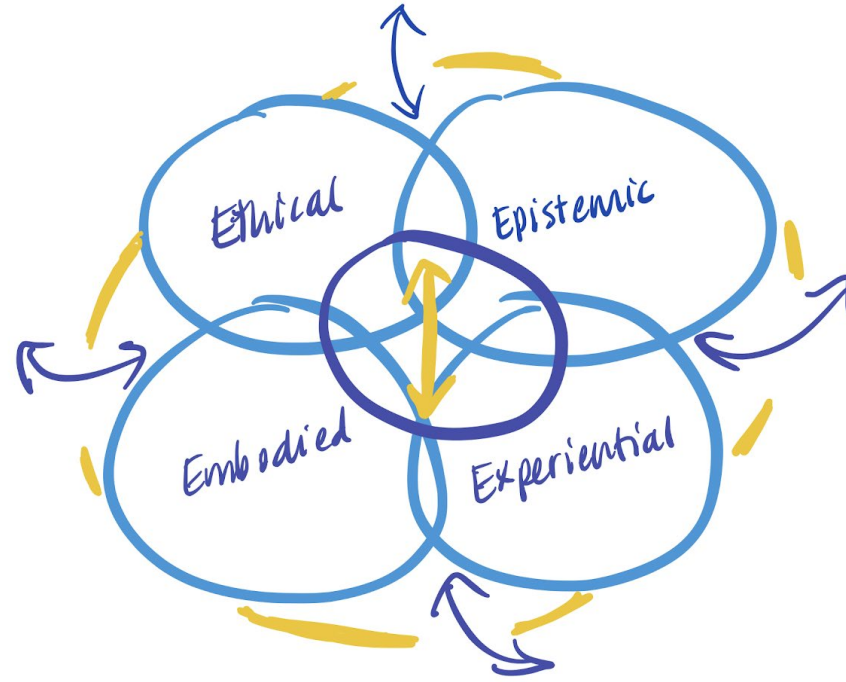
“I don’t want to fail that student.

He tried so hard and has shown me he can do the work in class”

If you were mentoring this beginning teacher, which of the 4 dimensions could prompt a reflexive conversation?
Add into the chat window which option you chose and why start there?

- A. Embodied - What effects is this having on you and how might you deal with it?
- B. Ethical - What would be fair and socially just?
- C. Epistemic - How are you making sense of assessment in the context of learning and knowing?
- D. Experiential - What events and practices have persuaded you to think this way? How have you seen others deal with similar situations?

Check in with Emma our illustrator



Implications - 4 Assessment capacities



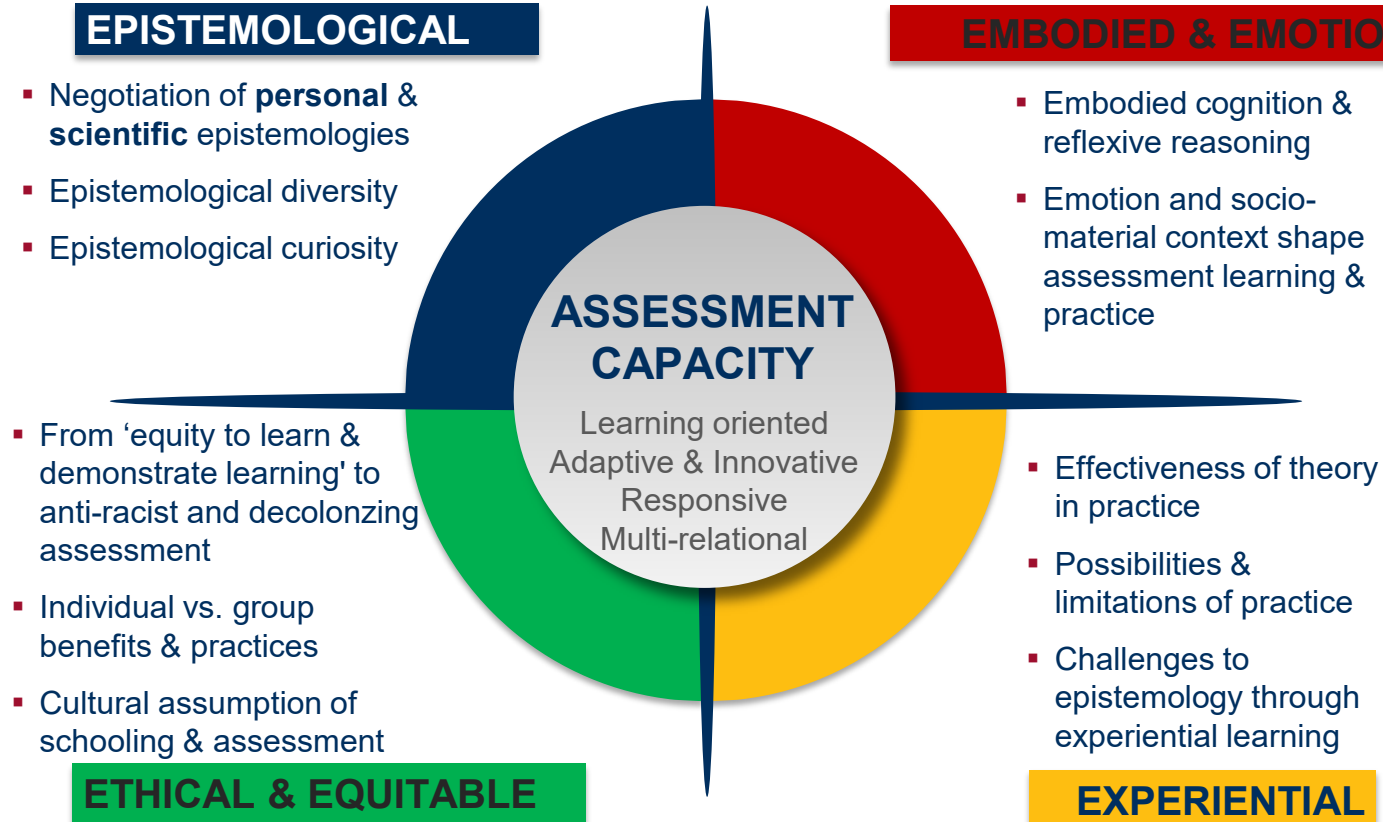
Our framework

Assessment Capacity

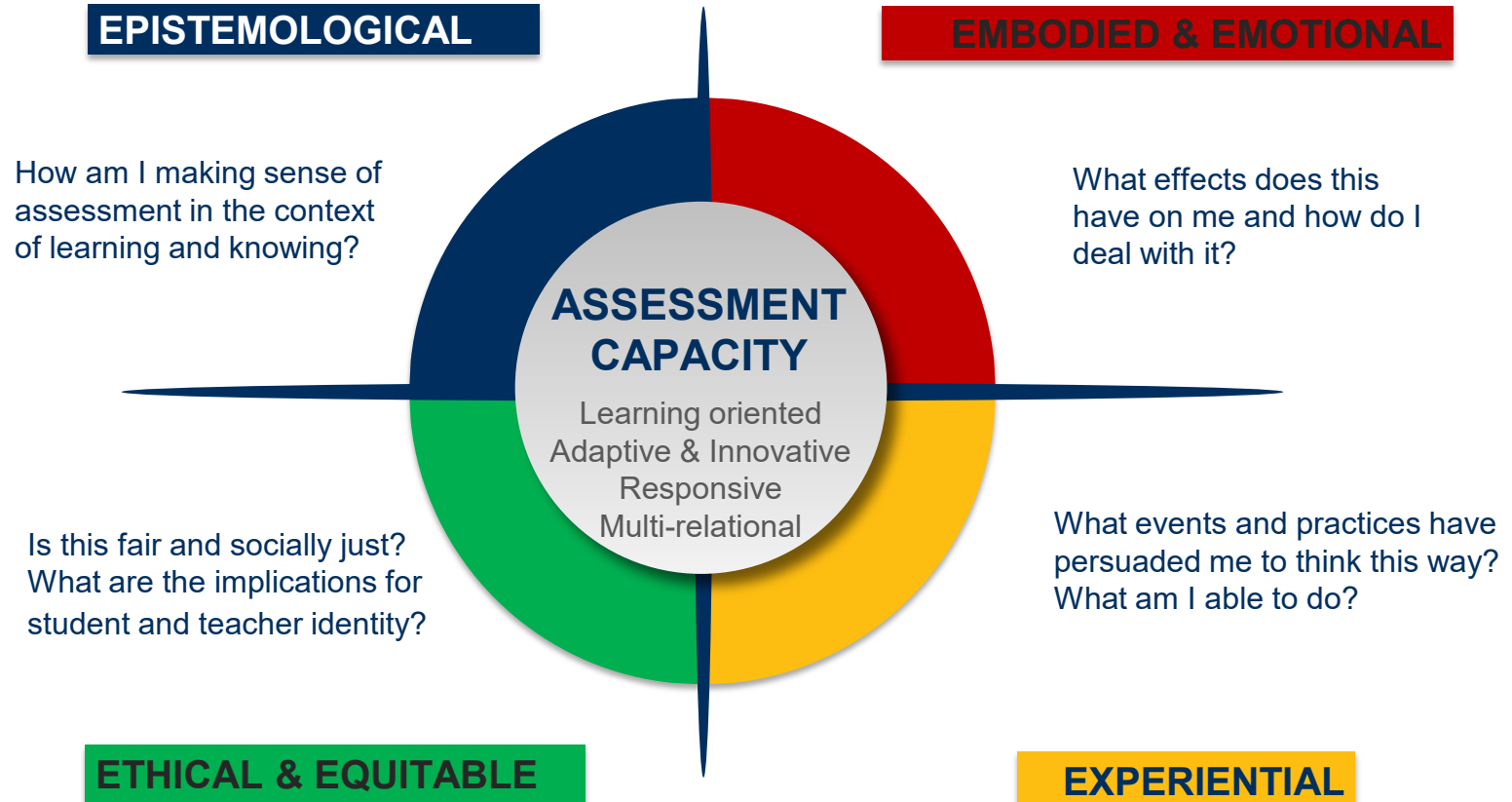
The capacity to learn about, adapt, and innovate assessment across contexts, systems, and relationships over time

- Learning oriented - deep and long term
- Adaptive & innovative
- Responsive to micro and macro contextual factors: Responsive flux to the wider ecology (politics, history, culture of assessment)
- Multi-relational

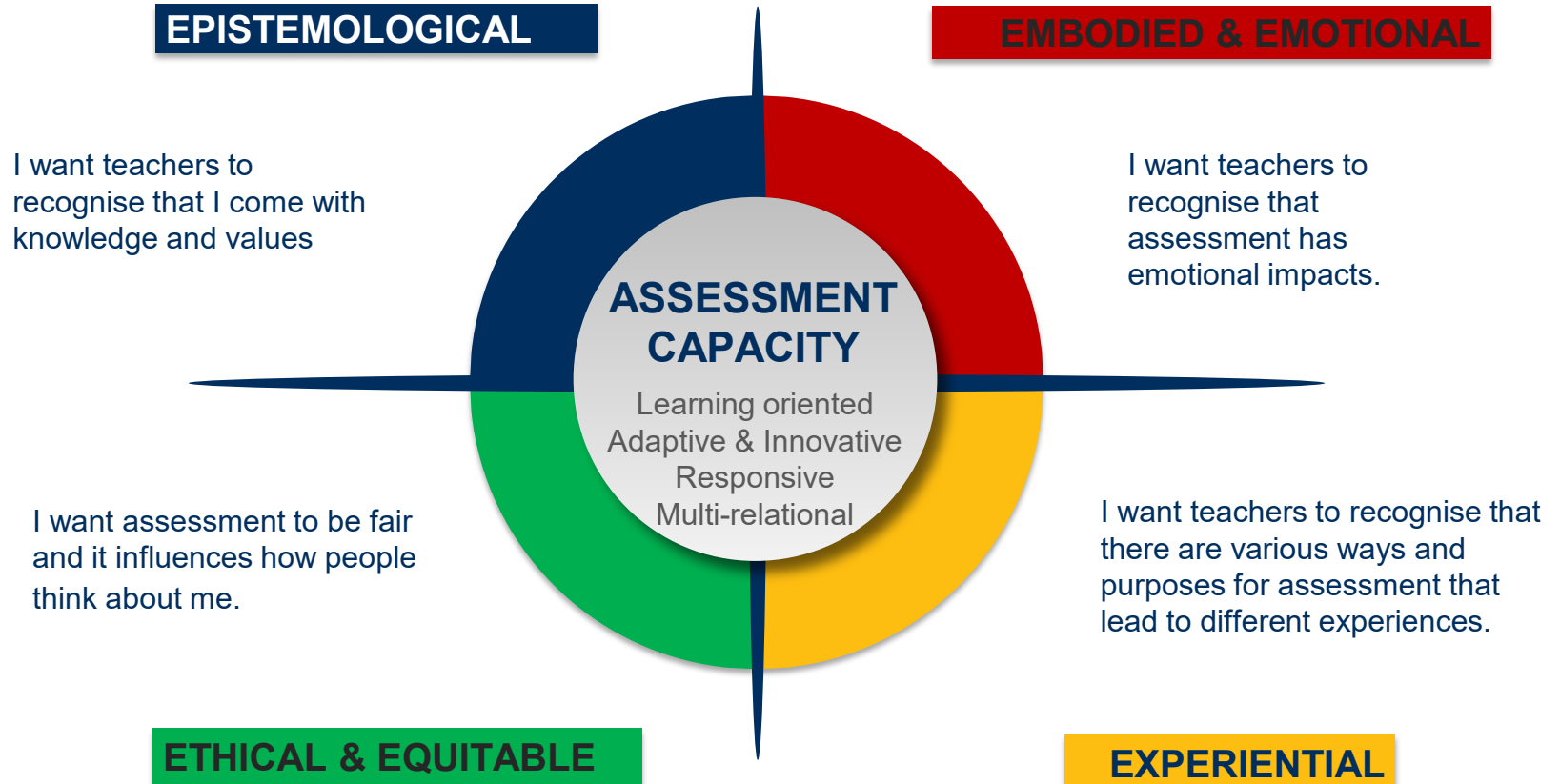
Our framework



Questions to ask ourselves...different starting points



Why our children would want our teachers to have them?



Potential for 4 capabilities for ongoing assessment learning - asking of self and peers and for students



Preparing Assessment Capable Teachers: Implications

1. Check to see what is prioritised in your context when compared to other contexts. Sometimes you can't see what is part of your context until you look outside.
2. Acknowledge assessment can be messy and difficult to navigate and has conflicts and incompatibilities. Not an individual teacher problem but an essential part of assessment in action.
3. Equip preservice teachers with principles and opportunity for reflexivity. Knowing why – not just what – helps to generate understanding and ways forward – especially important in a world with increasing polarization of opinions.
4. Keep an eye on emerging issues – equity – digital disruption – datatification. Workshop dilemmas and contradictions and possibilities.
5. Collaboration communities like MAC.



References

- Bennett, R. E. (2011). Formative assessment: a critical review. *Assessment in Education: Principals, Policy and Practice*. 18, 5–25. doi: 10.1080/0969594X.2010.513678
- Crooks, T. (1993). *Principles to Guide Assessment Practise*. Paper presented at the Assessment and Learning in New Zealand: Challenges and Choices Conference, Palmerston North.
- DeLuca, C., Willis, J., Cowie, B., Harrison, C., Coombs, A., Gibson, A., & Trask, S. (2019, November). Policies, programs, and practices: Exploring the complex dynamics of assessment education in teacher education across four countries. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 4, p. 132). Frontiers. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2019.00132/full>
- Dewey, J. (1985) “*The Logic of Judgments of Practice*.” Pp. 14–82 in John Dewey: Essays on Education and Politics, 1915, edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Emirbayer, M & Mische, A (1998) What is Agency? *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 103, No. 4 (January 1998), 962-1023
- Herppich, S., Praetorius, A., Förster, N., Glogger-Frey, I., Karst, K., Leutner, D., et al. (2018). Teachers' assessment competence: integrating knowledge-, process-, and product-oriented approaches into a competence-oriented conceptual model. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* 76, 181–93. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2017.12.001
- Looney, A., Cumming, J., van Der Kleij, F., and Harris, K. (2018). Reconceptualising the role of teachers as assessors: teacher assessment identity. *Assess. Educ. Principl. Policy Pract.* 25, 442–467. doi: 10.1080/0969594X.2016.1268090
- Volante, L., & Fazio, X. 2007. Exploring teacher candidates' assessment literacy: Implications for teacher education reform and professional development. *Canadian Journal of Education* 30, no. 3: 749–70.
- Stobart, G. (2008). *Testing times: The uses and abuses of assessment*. Routledge.