Abstract
Assessment in higher education is commonly held to contribute to feedback to students on their learning and the certification of their achievement. This paper argues that this short-term focus must be balanced against a longer-term emphasis for learning-oriented assessment to foster future learning after graduation. The paper proposes that students need to become assessors within the context of participation in practice, that is, the kinds of highly contextualised learning faced in life and work. It discusses the kinds of practices that are needed to refocus assessment within higher education courses to this end (399).

Introduction
The paper begins by drawing on relevant literature to argue that:

• the main purpose of a higher education is to provide a foundation for lifelong learning – in work and other social settings
• this has been recognized in recent times through developments with a focus on outcomes-based approaches, graduate attributes, employability and capability
• indications of a reappraisal of assessment include critique of the adequacy of formative assessment in helping students learn, criticism of the negative impact of much summative assessment, and expanding literature on effective assessment practice
• the role of assessment in learning beyond the University has been largely overlooked.

Purposes and problems of assessment
Educational literature has questioned the quality of both formative and summative practices, in particular, the narrow range of assessment methods in use, an over reliance on traditional examinations, tasks with inadequate intellectual challenge or which fail to distinguish between different levels of study, marks awarded with little relation to marking criteria, and feedback that is perfunctory, unhelpful or too late to impact on learning. The literature also suggests important directions for improvement but generally fails to address assessment as a foundation for future learning – the third purpose of assessment.

Becoming an assessor
To prepare students for lifelong learning requires a shift from their current passive roles – being assigned tasks, being given feedback and so on – to more active roles in making judgements about the quality of their own work and that of others. Student ability to assess the quality of work is often undermined by traditional assessment practices which foster an overreliance on the opinion of other. Passive assessment roles fail to develop student awareness of assessment design, the establishment of criteria and the making judgements and many grading practices lead students to focus on marks rather than the learning that marks represent.
Conceptualising assessment in terms of participation in practice

The development of assessment for long-term learning needs to address the nature of learning that students will experience after graduation and which is characterised by:

- participation in everyday activities with workgroups, families etc rather than courses or programs
- collaboration
- being integral to almost everything we do
- occurring in specific contexts.

By contrast, learning in educational settings often focuses on decontextualised acquisition that is unrelated to the ongoing and authentic challenges of practice. Initiatives that address the gap between real life practice and university preparation include work experience, problem-based learning and authentic assessment.

Does ‘assessment’ frame of the problem appropriately?

The label ‘assessment’ may contaminate this type of discussion as it is generally associated with a job for teachers rather one for students. A new way of talking about how learners monitor their work may be needed to avoid the anathema with which students respond to notions of becoming lifelong assessors.

Practices to align higher education assessment with long-term learning

Preparing students of the challenges of an unknown future requires significant reappraisal of the day to day activities undertaken in the course of teaching and learning, and assessment in particular. More sustainable assessment practice:

- engages students with standards and criteria and problem analysis
- emphasises the importance of context
- involves working in association with others
- involves authentic representations and productions
- promotes transparency of knowledge
- fosters reflexivity
- build learner agency and constructs active learners
- considers risk and confidence of judgement
- promotes seeking appropriate feedback
- requires portrayal of outcomes for different purposes

The paper provides additional detail on each of these points and a discussion of issues such as the tensions that exist between different points, their possible incompatibility with existing practices, and the importance of program level planning for assessment.

Conclusion

Sustainable assessment and other teaching and learning assessment practices that actively promote the skills and dispositions needed for long-term learning must be given priority is the most important goals of higher education are not to be undermined (411).

This series of briefs on assessment topics has been prepared by the UQ Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI) for UQ teaching academics. “UQ ASSESSMENT BRIEFS” of journal articles, book chapters, reviews, websites, reports etc are distributed to Faculty and School Teaching and Learning Chairs in a form designed to encourage wider distribution.
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