

## Chapter 6

### FURTHER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

#### *Why you might find these projects interesting*

*This chapter extends the story of our research endeavours in assessment, the first two projects dating from the early 1990s and the introduction of the National Curriculum. The importance of this first pair of accounts lies in the challenge of developing assessment instruments commissioned by a very assertive government agency, the School Examinations and Assessment Council. The politics of assessment is right at the surface of these two accounts and they illustrate our attempts to remain true to the spirit of the curriculum and supportive of teachers whilst managing the politics.*

*The particular significance of the third project, for the Royal Society of Arts and the Engineering Council UK, lay in the fact that we were not assessing design capability, but were rather commissioned to examine **generic** capabilities such as ‘citizenship’ and ‘managing information’. We demonstrate how our APU style (unpickled portfolio) performance tasks were used for this purpose.*

*The final two projects followed after a decade of national curriculum implementation, when the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (SEACs successor body) finally recognised some of the distortions that had been created by its hard-line approach to assessment. In *Assessing Design Innovation*, we were commissioned to develop a new approach to assessment embracing the rediscovered qualities of ‘teamwork’ and ‘creativity’. The final project, *e-scape*, grew out of that innovation project and explores the world of e-assessment through e-portfolios. Whilst the project depends upon some innovative technologies, the key messages concern the impact of the system on learning, teaching and assessment.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The first two projects dealt with in this chapter are from the early 1990s when the introduction of the National Curriculum (DES/WO, 1989) forced some fundamental changes in assessment policy at a national level. They involved establishing the initial assessment resources for the new curriculum that the UK government announced whilst we were in the midst of *APU Design & Technology*. The Curriculum included a new assessment regime which for the first time legislated for what was to be taught in schools – the Programmes of Study, and what was to be assessed – the Attainment Targets. Within this structure there was a requirement to develop Standard Assessment Tasks for 7- and 14-year-olds. TERU joined forces with King's College London, the Institute of Education London and Hodder and Stoughton publishers to form the Consortium for Assessment and Testing in Schools (CATS). When the contracts for developing the Standard Assessment Tasks for technology were let, the Consortium was successful in winning development contracts for both. The projects, *CATS KS3 Technology* dealing with 14-year-olds (1989–1991) and *CATS KS1 Technology* dealing with 7-year-olds (1990–1992), were conducted by TERU.

Having concluded these projects, it was a decade later that we turned once again to the challenges of performance assessment when it became apparent to the Department for Education and Skills and other public bodies that the Curriculum was in need of refreshing. The third project discussed here is one in which we worked with the RSA Opening Minds project team. This team proposed a radical, competence-based curriculum, as an alternative to the subject-based National Curriculum. The new Opening Minds curriculum was trialled in a range of secondary schools across England and had a strong focus on formative and portfolio assessment. TERU was commissioned to research alternative approaches that complemented these. This project, *Researching Assessment Approaches*, created opportunities to explore assessment in other curricular settings and also to consider the assessment of teamwork.

In parallel with this, we were involved in a project that arose through the growing awareness (in the government Department for Education and Skills and elsewhere) that assessment processes were suppressing creative performance in design & technology. A mismatch was perceived between the visionary 'Importance of Design and Technology' mission statement (DfES/-QCA, 1999) and the reality in classrooms, where teaching and learning was increasingly being driven by the demands of assessment – particularly for GCSE examinations. As a result, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned TERU to undertake research into the development and assessment of creativity and innovation. The *Assessing Design Innovation* project (2002–2004) was born.