Enhancing teacher assessment literacy in English language education: Problems and pitfalls

Teacher assessment literacy is regarded as one of the most influential factors in improving student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1999; Hattie, 2008), in particular a teacher's ability to collect, interpret and use a range of assessment information to monitor and evaluate learning needs, provide targeted feedback and help students set achievable goals. This paper will first unpack some of the key concepts underpinning teacher assessment literacy and the development of an assessment *for* learning culture, then focus on a case study of one collaborative Australian approach to building teacher assessment literacy, the Tools to Enhance Assessment Literacy for Teachers of English as an Additional Language (TEAL) project, see http://teal.global2.vic.edu.au/, which is designed to help teachers assess English as an additional language (EAL) students more effectively so as to improve learning and teaching. The tools include four main components: first, a set of sequenced teacher professional learning resources about EAL and assessment designed for small group or self-directed study; secondly, an assessment tool bank containing a range of assessment tools and tasks, including computer-adaptive tests, organized around the three broad macro-skills (oral, reading and writing), three macro-functions (informative, persuasive , imaginative), three stages of schooling (early elementary, mid to upper elementary, and secondary) and a range of EAL proficiency levels; thirdly, a range of assessment-for-learning and teaching exemplars including a selection of annotated units of work across a range of subject areas and year levels showing assessment tasks with formative feedback embedded within a teaching/learning cycle, and finally, an online teacher discussion forum, including a password-protected area for teachers to share problems and strategies and to moderate work samples. The paper discusses some of the political, technical and practical problems and pitfalls in developing such system-level resources for teacher assessment literacy in English language education and their potential to make a difference to teachers and students.