

Marika Toivola

# FLIPPED

# ASSESSMENT

A Leap towards  
Assessment for Learning



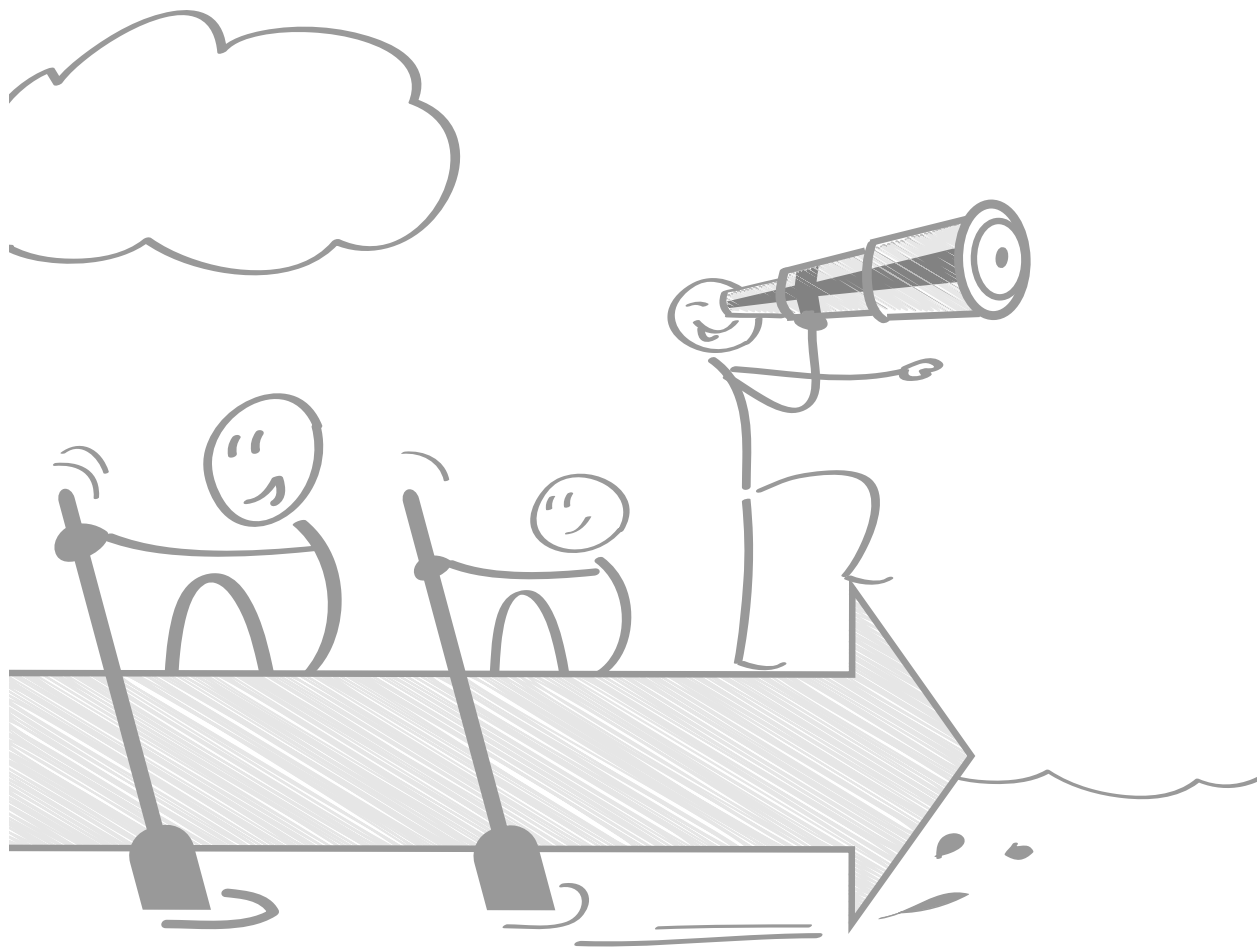
EDITA

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**A Leap towards  
Assessment for Learning**



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# CONTENTS

To the reader	7
Introduction	10

<b>1</b>	<b>BEING A TEACHER</b>	
	<b>has no basic pattern</b>	<b>15</b>

Change in schools	17
School as a learning organisation	20
A teacher needs interaction in order to develop	21
The notion of assessment's fairness and objectivity limits its development	23



## 2 **GROWTH** towards self-regulation 27

What is self-regulation? 30

Self- and peer-assessment support  
the growth towards self-regulation 33

## 3 **TOWARDS** assessment for learning 39

Assessment for learning defined 44

A teacher's tacit knowledge is always in  
the background of assessment for learning 47

## 4 **LEARNING** needs to be guided 53

An ethical view of assessment	54
What is feedback?	59
The effect of feedback on motivation	61

## 5 **FLIPPED** learning and flipped assessment 65

A socio-cultural view of learning and assessment	68
What is flipped learning?	70
A student's agency is emphasised in a flipped learning culture	75
The flipping of assessment	79
Appropriate tools for measurements	84
Flipped assessment supports a growth mindset	87

# 6

## ASSESSMENT

for learning  
helps students

learn

91

Zone of proximal development	93
Vygotsky never scaffolded	97
Scaffolding defined	100
The role of video in flipped learning	101
Opportunities to learn are more valuable than knowledge	104
The importance of questions for learning	108
Epilogue	112
Sources	117

## TO THE READER

Finland is recognised globally as a top country for education. The success is based on teacher training that is research-based and is world-class. Finnish teachers are educated at the master's degree level in education. Primary school (grades 1–6) teachers are specialised in education. Lower and upper secondary school teachers specialise in the subjects they teach, in addition to completing one-year teacher pedagogical studies.

In Finland, children start school in the year they reach the age of seven. Primary school lasts for six years, lower secondary school for three years, and upper secondary school for 2–4 years. In Finland, schools are funded by tax money and are therefore free for everyone.

In Finland, teachers enjoy a higher degree of freedom than international peers in planning their teaching independently on the basis of the Basic Education Act and the national and local curriculum. The Finnish curriculum emphasises student activity, collaboration and growth in self-regulation. The student is seen as an active participant who sets goals for his or her learning and takes responsibility for his or her learning. Along with learning new knowledge and skills, the student learns to reflect on their learning processes, experiences and feelings. The learning process emphasises skills in learning to learn. It can be said that it is more important to learn how to learn than what to learn.

Behind the Finnish schooling success story is the courage to strive for excellence by doing things differently than others. In Finland, teachers are not compared with one another and there are no compulsory national examinations in Finland other than an exam to qualify for post-secondary education, taken at the end of the final year of upper secondary school. Learning outcomes are monitored through sample-based assessments, usually conducted in ninth grade. The Basic Education Act and the Upper Secondary Schools Act require teachers, through assessment, to guide and encourage studies and to develop the student's requirements for self-assessment. Thus, student assessment in Finland should not be based on summative tests, but those still manage to hold their ground. The formative assessment (assessment for learning) has not gone as well as hoped, as its purpose has not been fully understood in schools. Assessment for

learning (formative assessment) is for learning, not for the judgment of learning. How successfully the students can be ranked according to their skills is not a guarantee of the goodness or fairness of the assessment. Assessment for learning can only be considered a success when it has a positive impact on student learning.

The primary purpose of this book is to support teachers in challenging their thoughts about assessment and to increase the understanding among decision makers and the students' parents about the challenges faced by teachers in developing their own work. At its core, the implementation of assessment for learning is about each teacher becoming a developer of self-regulated assessment. For this to happen, three basic psychological needs must be met: the need for autonomy, the need for competence and the need for cohesion. Autonomy refers to the freedom of the teacher to choose the procedures he or she uses. It also includes the ability to take responsibility for the choices you make. A teacher's autonomy is not a context-free characteristic of the individual, but it is also intrinsically linked to the ability to function as part of the collaboration and to be productive to the collaboration. Competence refers to the teacher's experience in terms of knowledge and success, as well as the ability to develop and cope with challenges. Cohesiveness means a sense of security in the work collaboration, dialogue and feeling of solidarity through the collaboration. A skilful pedagogical leader understands the learning potential of his or her own organisation and creates participation and ownership in the work collaboration, and through those, a sense of community. A learning collaboration for teachers is created through this sense of community and assessment, in which there is a promise to inspire and also to fail.

This book was originally published in Finnish in January, 2019. It is translated as such into English, except for the 'To the Reader' section, which differs from the original publication.

I dedicate this book to the teachers.

January 2020, Rauma, Finland

*Marika*





**Marika Toivola**, MA, is a trained physicist and is also a subject teacher in mathematics and physics. Marika is a pioneer in flipped learning and flipped assessment, who was also awarded the Mathematics Teacher of the Year Award 2019. In 2013, the Technology Industries of Finland Centennial Foundation recognised Marika for her efforts in promoting open learning materials.

Marika is one of the most sought-after Finnish trainers of flipped learning and formative assessment. Listeners particularly appreciate her personal experience with school transformation, both in upper and lower secondary school. In addition to her teaching work, Marika is pursuing a PhD in educational science at the University of Helsinki in a school, education, social and culture doctoral programme and, in her doctoral dissertation, seeks to understand the theoretical justification for flipped learning and the associated change in the teacher's role and identity.

Marika Toivola is a mother of four school-aged children, and she is passionate about ending the homogenisation of both students and teachers. She does not give praise to the current, performance-oriented focus in schools, where there is no room for failure. According to Marika, children should be educated to meet the needs of tomorrow. The future requires courage and creativity that will differentiate people from machine intelligence.

## INTRODUCTION

When teachers are asked how they evaluate their students, the typical answer is: with exams, tests or similar formal methods. When asked how they can be sure that the students have learned, they usually answer by referring to homework, classroom work, conversations with students, and even the students' facial expressions (William, 2006). These latter responses do not even mention the test scores. Assessment has a strong ethical dimension, which is why we have reason to critically scrutinise this activity that we call assessment. What do we ultimately mean by assessment and how do we implement it?

Learning assessment has two complementary functions: **assessment for learning** (formative assessment), which promotes and regulates learning, and **assessment of learning** (summative assessment), which verifies learning. The verification of learning is performed in relation to criteria provided by the curriculum. The foundation of assessment for learning is in the targets that it sets. The word *assessment*, itself, presents a problem in the development of assessment for learning, because it easily generates from one's own experience an image of judging and measuring competence. However, assessment for learning is not about criticism. Formative assessment is assessment for learning, not learning in order to be judged. Above all, it is a question of responsible teaching. The key to developing this assessment is to examine how a student can help assess and develop their own skills based on the feedback they receive. In terms of learning, this is crucial, as students who are able to assess their own competence level in relation to their goals are the most successful in their studies (Hattie, 2009).

In this book, assessment is viewed in terms of an assessment culture, which aims to support the construction of a learning culture. Thus, assessment is not considered to be a function which values or judges activities that have already taken place. The book presents a wealth of theoretical insights that will allow the teacher to challenge his or her own views of assessment. Theoretical rationales will help the teacher to free him or herself of the shackles that are often associated with



*Marika Toivola*

Flipped Assessment presents formative assessment as the most important factor in a student-centered learning culture. The book is built on practical experience and strong theoretical foundations. The story of the author developing her assessment practices offers guidance for readers who want to develop their own assessment practices and learning culture. The book also describes how assessment is used to support the students' self-regulation and to help them to reach their own, individual goals. At its best, assessment supports the learning of the whole community.

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