c. Other stakeholders, particularly **parents**, depend on feedback to know that the children are making progress.

2.3 Roles of teachers and learners

2.3.1   Role of teachers

> **Reflect**
>
> *Brainstorm, preferably with a partner or in a group:*
>
> *In what ways do you think the teacher's role in the assessment process has changed with the introduction of formative task-based assessment?*

In formative assessment the classroom teacher plays a much more pivotal role in the assessment process than in the past. It is the classroom teacher who determines the *how, what* and *why* of assessment, rather than an administrator or outside body (such as the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA)). It is, therefore, imperative that teachers understand how to design assessment tasks and how to give feedback to learners on their performance.

Teachers face a number of challenges when introducing formative assessment into their classes. They need to strike a balance between teaching and assessment, and at the same time provide adequate and meaningful feedback without creating an undue workload for themselves. They can achieve this if they recognize that assessment is a collaborative task which should involve their learners as well as themselves.

2.3.2   Role of learners

> **Reflect**
>
> *Brainstorm, preferably with a partner or in a group:*
>
> *How can learners be involved in assessment?*
> *Why is it important to involve learners in the assessment process?*
> *What implications does involving learners have on the design of assessment?*

Learners can be taught to assess their own performance, i.e. to self assess and to assess their peers' performance. To do this they need to understand the criteria used to assess them. It is therefore important that criteria used are made explicit to learners and are drawn up using language that is understandable to them. This helps to demystify the assessment process, and by being transparent the assessment process should ultimately help learners learn.

Self assessment involves learners in determining their own achievement or lack of it in the light of goals set either by themselves or others. Ideally these goals should be set by the learners themselves, since only they can specify their own requirements, rate of learning, etc., yet initially learners may equate these goals with those of their teachers because they do not know how to set attainable goals of their own. … Only once they have grasped the evaluative criteria as a result of learner training will learners be able to set realistic goals for themselves. (Lewkowicz & Moon, 1985: 49).

Self assessment is important since it helps learners perceive their own needs and to understand the demands of the course as well as any assessments that they are required to complete. It fosters learner independence which is particularly important for successful language learning.

Involving peers in the assessment and feedback process also has other distinct advantages. Learners bring with them different levels of abilities and experience and so they should be able to help each other as they work together. In doing so, they will become more aware of the criteria used to judge them and ultimately better able to judge their own progress. They will also be sharing the responsibility for feedback with the teacher, which, if well managed, will reduce the marking workload. However, it is important to recognize that for peer and self assessment to be successful, their teacher must invest time initially on learner training and on explaining assessment criteria.

2.4 Considerations in designing formative assessment tasks

You will need to consider the following when designing formative assessment tasks:

- identify the specific learning targets and objectives you want to assess;
- set specific aims, i.e. decide what the aims of the assessment are;
- consider the type of assessment task appropriate to your aims;
- design / modify a task to meet your assessment aims;
- identify criteria by which learner performance will be judged; and
- develop a feedback mechanism to use for the assessment.

Let us return to Task B in section 2.1, repeated here for ease of reference, and relate it to the points above: