

## AEA-Europe Newsletter - Autumn 2012



### Latest News: Kathleen Tattersall, President of AEA-Europe

It is with great sadness that we have to announce that our President, Kathleen Tattersall, died on 23 January, after a short illness. Our condolences go to Geraldine, Kathleen's partner and to her family and friends.

Kathleen's death is a great loss to the Association and to the assessment field more broadly. In November 2012, at the Berlin Conference, the Presidency was passed to Kathleen by the former President, Steven Bakker. She took up the role with her usual energy, commitment and professionalism - working right up to her last few days. Her depth of experience in leading organisations to success already had benefited us greatly and would have continued to do so. She was an inspirational leader who valued people. She believed in the Association and saw clearly how well it has fostered collegiality and friendships between assessment professionals across Europe. Her vision for the Association was to take it forward based upon that strength.

We will be writing an obituary for the next Newsletter, which will celebrate Kathleen's achievements.



### Latest News – Editorial

#### A word from Steven Bakker

Dear AEA-Europe members, colleagues and friends,

In the editorial of the previous Newsletter I announced that a position would be opened soon for a consultant who would support the Council in its efforts to increase the membership and thereby the Association's capacity to be 'the association to which assessment professionals throughout Europe look to for information, contacts and career development' as it was put in our 2009-2012 Strategic Plan. I am pleased to announce that this vacancy has been filled in the person of Fiona Montague, from Fairlie Mckenzie International

#### Framework of Standards

Another important achievement in support of increasing the authority of the Association is the delivery of the final version of the Framework of Standards for Educational Assessment.

However, the word 'Final' isn't entirely appropriate as the Standards Working Group, consisting of Gerben van Lent, Andrew Watts and Saskia Wools, explicitly stated that the Framework should be a 'growing document', developing and improving by being used by members and other assessment professionals for evaluation and comparison of the quality concepts they apply.

The Framework is the result of a process that started in 2007 and was prompted by the feeling that an organisation calling itself the Association for Educational Assessment – Europe should have a view on the concept of professional assessment in education. During its May meeting the Council discussed the latest version of the Framework and the recommendations the Working Group made for promoting the use of the document. One of the decisions was that the Framework should not only exist as a downloadable document but will also become available as a hard copy, with a proper ISBN registration, and be sent to all corporate members for their libraries. It will be on sale at the AEA-E desk during the Berlin conference, so look out there for this first official AEA-E publication!

#### Standards, Fairness and Ethics

One of the five guiding principles of the Standards Framework is that it emphasizes ethics / fairness and the rights of the individual. It defines learners as 'the main beneficiaries of what the Framework is intended to achieve' and refers to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, quoting that 'children who can express a view have a right to have that view given 'due weight' in all matters that affect them'. The 'Framework' then states that 'the rights of all candidates, children and adults, cannot be overlooked and best practice dictates

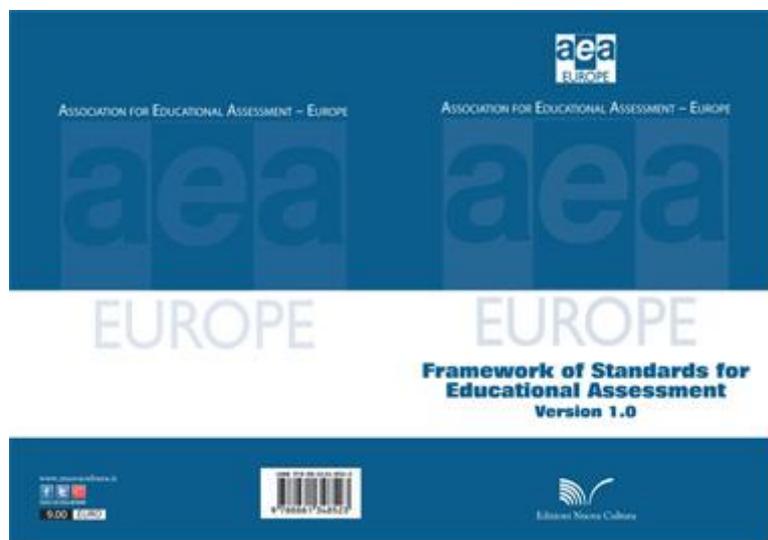
that the assessment belongs to them (in the sense of their being beneficiaries, not in a legal/formal or technical sense) and not to those who devise and administer it.' The Framework should enable stakeholders to evaluate the fairness and transparency of decisions taken on the basis of assessments and to judge the way that results are reported and used.

In my practice as an International Consultant I have come, and still come, across many instances where the outcome of such an evaluation would be negative. The Terms of Reference for a recent project explicitly requested me to investigate 'the scale, nature and characteristics of non-standard behaviours and unethical practices associated with the grades 9 and 12 examinations' and to advise on 'sanctions that should be introduced to induce students and teachers to avoid such behaviors or practices'. This could be seen as an example where, as the consequence of a negative evaluation, measures are taken to map the problem and propose solutions. So far so good. But what if you are confronted with practices that are unfair and unethical, and authorities are looking away from them, or even worse, abusing assessment for their own political purposes? All the standards of the world are probably of little help to fight such practices. And as an individual one's powers are limited to do something about it. Should it then be a task of our Association to speak up if such practices are reported? Is this part of 'Being the association to which assessment professionals throughout Europe look to for information, contacts and career development', or is it an undesirable mingling with national politics? Recently, the director of one of our corporate member institutions was fired for political reasons, and the majority of staff followed her in resignation after pressure had been exerted on them to manipulate assessment data. This case prompted the Council to discuss the issue and explore the sensitivities and pitfalls surrounding it, without arriving at a unanimous conclusion. Maybe a 'Code of Conduct in Educational Assessment' should be the next official AEA-E publication. The colleagues who were the subjects of the case that sparked our discussion would definitely have benefitted from it, to justify their courageous decision to step down and not to be used for unethical practices.

**AEA-E President**  
September 2012

## Framework of Standards

As indicated in Steven's editorial, the Framework of Standards for Educational Assessment will be published in time for the Berlin conference in November. Here is a preview of the cover – so that you'll all recognise it instantly.



The communications and publications committee had hoped to have some responses to the Framework to include in this edition of the newsletter, but this has not proved possible as few people have yet seen it. We hope that Steven's introduction to it will stimulate interest and that there will be further interest generated during the Berlin conference. We then hope to include several responses to the Framework in the Spring newsletter next year – so we will be approaching possible contributors at the conference (but if you would like to contribute, you don't have to wait to be asked!).

## Assessment for Learning in International Contexts (ALIC)



**Stuart Shaw**  
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**Martin Johnson**  
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**Paul Warwick**  
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### **The context**

The Assessment for Learning in International Contexts (ALIC) project seeks to extend earlier understandings around AfL through gathering evidence across a range of national contexts using an adapted version of a survey tool employed by James & Pedder (2006). When examining the issue of values and practices in the UK, and possible gaps between the two, the 'Learning How to Learn Project' surveyed 558 teachers in England (James & Pedder, 2006; Pedder, 2006). James & Pedder (2006) reported three underlying dimensions of assessment practice:

1. Making learning explicit
2. Promoting learning autonomy
3. Performance orientation

The ALIC project attempts to build on the work of James & Pedder (2006) by gathering survey data from teachers who work in national contexts which are diverse from each other in terms of their linguistic and historical educational traditions. In carrying out this research, the following questions have informed the work of the project team:

- Which assessment practices seem to be valued by teachers in national contexts other than the UK?
- What are the predominant assessment values-practice gaps revealed through the survey?
- Which dimensions (or factors) of assessment practice seem to be prevalent in the survey data?
- Do teachers working in different national contexts evidence the importance of the same dimensions of assessment practice that seem apparent through research carried out in England?

### **What is happening**

The ALIC team has carried out a critical review of the UK survey, drawing on their shared experience of developing accessible assessment items for different international contexts, which aimed to simplify the language of the original survey whilst retaining the original essence of the instrument. A draft of the ALIC survey was then piloted with a small group of teachers in some of the sample nations in order to validate its format.

Once the review was complete the survey was distributed, via a dedicated website, to schools and colleges in the five sample nations. 613 schools and colleges were contacted directly in three of the five study nations (Argentina: 186 schools/colleges; India: 288 schools/colleges; Indonesia: 135 schools/colleges). Taking into consideration local arrangements in Saudi Arabia and Nigeria, indirect contacts were sent to schools and colleges through British Council offices. A total of nearly 250 ALIC surveys have so far been returned.

The first data analysis stage involved descriptive analysis of the survey return data. Exploratory analysis of the national survey data has already revealed some interesting variances in the profile of teacher demographics.

The second data analysis stage replicated the statistical methods used by James and Pedder (2006) and Pedder (2006) in their work with teachers in the UK. In order to explore comparisons between teachers' values and practices a gap analysis compared the extent to which teachers' reported practices matched their reported

values; with any discrepancies indicating between their professional assessment for learning aspirations and their actual practices.

In addition to the gap analysis, factor analysis has been carried out on the teacher practice survey data to explore whether any discernible factors could be identified in the survey return data.

When the analysis has been completed it is hoped that the outcomes will be reported on at future AEA-Europe conferences.

### Why inform members

The language of Assessment for Learning appears to belong to a ubiquitous educational discourse, being used across diverse social, economic and cultural boundaries (Swaffield, 2011). Given the multi-linguistic, multi-cultural nature of AEA-Europe's education and assessment community, the complexities surrounding the development and embedding of successful assessment for learning practices across diverse international contexts could prove to be of great interest both within Western and non-Western educational contexts.

### More information

For further information please contact [shaw.s@cie.org.uk](mailto:shaw.s@cie.org.uk)

### References

- James, M., & Pedder, D. (2006). Beyond method: assessment and learning practices and values. *Curriculum Journal*, 17(2), 109–138.
- Pedder, D. (2006). Organizational conditions that foster successful classroom promotion of Learning How to Learn. *Research Papers in Education*, 21(2), 171–200.
- Swaffield, S. (2011). Getting to the heart of authentic Assessment for Learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 18(4), 433–449.

## Developing Numeracy Mapping for Primary Years



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### The context

Following the latest educational reform in Norway, The Knowledge Promotion, The Ministry of Education and Research launched a strategy plan "to ensure good education for everyone and to prevent dropouts". The strategy, named Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning, came as a result of international surveys of numeracy skills indicating that Norway is one of the countries with the greatest variation in learning outcomes among students, and that a large percentage of Norwegian students have weak mathematics skills.

One main initiative was to initiate mapping tests of year 1-3 students to identify students at risk of mathematics learning difficulties at this early stage in their schooling. Tests were introduced in 2008 (Year 2), 2009 (Year 3) and 2012 (Year 1). The test is mandatory for all Norwegian year 2 students, while the schools or the school owners decide whether to participate in the voluntary tests for year 1 and year 3 students.

All tests are constructed to measure the students' basic numerical understanding and computational skills, and a theoretical framework was developed aligned with the Norwegian mathematics curriculum's competency goals, drawing on international research. The students scoring below a cut-off score are identified as 'at-risk children', who may be in need of extra help and adaptation in their schooling. By design, the tests have a ceiling effect, discriminating mainly between the first and second quintiles of the students.

The test is first and foremost a tool for the teacher to help uncover the areas in which the students show a lack of understanding and skills. Along with the tests, the teachers receive a teacher's guide. This guide contains advice on how to do further mapping: that is, how to gain more precise information about the students' difficulties and suggestions for classroom activities that could help the students overcome these difficulties. The life span of these tests is set to 5 years.

### **What is happening**

Norway is currently revising their mathematics curriculum and the new curriculum plans will be effective from the school year 2013/2014. Consequently, the Directorate for Education and Training has decided to revise the three mapping tests as well. The Department of Teacher Education and School Research (ILS) has been given the assignment to develop new tests to be used in 2014 for all three grade levels (Year 1, 2, and 3).

Based on a framework given by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, and analysis of data from the existing tests, the new mapping tests for students are currently being constructed. The development of new items should be finished in November 2012 and will be followed by pre-piloting (January) and piloting of new tests (Late April - Early May). The teachers' guides are also to be improved, making them more user-friendly and readable for the teachers.

### **Why inform members**

Many countries are taking similar initiatives involving developing mapping tests to detect struggling students. These are complicated and challenging projects, requiring expertise in many different areas; marrying content knowledge research with insights from special needs education and psychometrics.

We welcome sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience regarding large-scale assessments, measuring mathematical abilities and identifying students with mathematical difficulties from other members.

## **Governing Complex Education Systems – a case study from Norway**

### **The context**

OECD/CERI has launched a new project called the Governing Complex Education Systems (GCES). The aim of the project is to "... explore which governance mechanisms and knowledge options facilitate effective steering of complex education systems"

(see [http://www.oecd.org/document/58/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_35845581\\_47247098\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/58/0,3746,en_2649_35845581_47247098_1_1_1_1,00.html)).

According to OECD, complexity in education systems is on the rise, with more demanding stakeholders and educated parents focusing upon the individual needs of their children. OECD claims that governments in most OECD countries have increased school autonomy and they expect such trends to increase, due to the demanding populations. OECD would like to conduct a number of country case studies and identify and compare implementation strategies in complex educational systems. These case studies will be included in a comparative report and will be addressed in the next biennium (2013-2014).

Cases in GCES are defined as education policies/policy programmes that have been implemented (and preferably evaluated) in multilevel governance systems. Criteria for selection is that the policy programme has been introduced and implemented for at least three years, and that the aim of the programme has been at improving the quality of primary or early secondary education. Special focus is on steering of the implementation of the programme, priority-setting and accountability.

### **What is happening**

So far, case studies have been conducted in the Netherlands and Poland, and the present case study is conducted in Norway. The Norwegian case study is looking at how the educational program Assessment for Learning (<http://www.udir.no/Vurdering-for-laring/>) has been implemented in Norway, with particular focus upon steering, capacity building and accountability. The AfL program is a four-year program involving more than 400 schools, aimed at improving students' learning outcome through using better assessment practices.

The following research questions are addressed in each country:

1. How do political decision-makers on the central level design, organise and pursue the steering of education systems in multilevel context (national, regional and local level?)
2. How do stakeholders on the decentralized level organise and pursue the implementation of education policies in multilevel contexts?

3. How do the central and the decentralised levels interact with each other and with the local level in steering educational systems?

Research questions are addressed by conducting text analysis of relevant documents, official press briefings and statements, literature reviews of national and international research on Assessment for Learning programs. In addition the research team has conducted more than 40 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and Research, the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, supervisors in the project, Norwegian researchers, heads of municipalities, leading governmental and policy makers, teachers, students, and heads of schools. Results from the Norwegian case study will be presented first in the official OECD report by the end of 2012, or the beginning of 2013.

#### **Why inform members**

As this is a new initiative by the OECD, other countries may well be interested in being involved.

The research team for the Norwegian country case includes Therese Hopfenbeck, Teresa Florez and Yasmine El Masri (University of Oxford) and Astrid Tolo, (University Bergen).

## Member's News

**The Centre for Education Research and Policy** at AQA has launched a new website ([www.cerp.aqa.org.uk](http://www.cerp.aqa.org.uk)), making available a significant amount of its education and assessment research that has never been released beyond AQA's doors. There are currently over 100 papers listed in the library and AQA are regularly adding more from their archive. They are also regularly publishing comment and opinion pieces from those across the education, research and policy sectors.

**Paul Newton** is moving on from the post of Director of the Cambridge Assessment Network. He will be taking up a Chair at the Institute of Education in January 2013.

**Newman Burdett** has taken up the post of Head of Centre for International Comparisons at NFER from September 2012.

**Andrew Watts** is stepping down from the Professional Development Committee, after having served on it for 7 years. We will recognise Andrew's contribution to the Association in the next newsletter.

*The editor accepts no responsibility for the following piece of news – it is included under duress and is the work of Chris Whetton with some help from Gabriella Agrusti.*

If you have enjoyed the AEA Newsletter over the past four years, then one of those to thank has been Julie Sewell of NFER, who was involved in its creation and keen to edit the Newsletter. Julie was at the original meeting of the AEA Communications Committee where the idea of the newsletter was formed and quickly took on responsibility for soliciting articles and producing it. She has now retired from NFER leaving a gap that will be hard to fill.

As is usual when people "retire", she is moving on to a new, even busier life. In Julie's case this means as a grandmother, running an open-air swimming pool in London, and stewarding at the Hay Festival, as well as embarking on a marathon walk along the Camino de Santiago de Compostela.



One of Julie's delights is to see people in a new light at the AEA conferences, particularly on the dance floor at the conference dinner or on excursions. She enjoys putting such pictures in the newsletter. As a final revenge, here is a picture of Julie raising money by taking part in a late night marathon walk for a women's cancer charity – The Moon Walk. This illustrates that a good cause is more important than preserving dignity.

Well done Julie, NFER will miss you.

*Editor's note: I am continuing to edit the newsletter for the time being and I look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones in Berlin in November.*

## Conferences & Courses

### **ATP Innovations in Testing**

February 3 – 6, 2013, Lauderdale, Florida

<http://www.innovationsintesting.org/>

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### **New Mexico Higher Education Assessment and Retention Conference**

February 28 – March 1, 2013, Albuquerque

<http://www.nmsu.edu/NMHEAR/>

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### **North Central Association Higher Learning Commission's 2013 Annual Conference**

April 5 – 9, 2013, Chicago

<http://annualconference.ncahlc.org/>

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### **AERA 2013**

#### **Education and Poverty: Theory, Research, Policy, and Praxis**

April 27 – May 1, San Francisco, California

<http://www.aera.net/tabid/10208/Default.aspx>

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### **CICE-2013**

#### **Canada International Conference on Education**

June 17 – 20, Ontario Canada

<http://www.ciceducation.org/>

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### **AEA-Europe 14th Annual Conference 2013**

Nov, TBC

<http://www.aea-europe.net>

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### **EXAMINING RISK:**

#### **Deeper analysis of the pressures on assessment in England**

Dear friends and colleagues,

Just in case the message hasn't reached you yet, I wanted to let you know about my division's (and my organisation's) flagship event, the Cambridge Assessment Conference 2012 which will take place on Wednesday 10 October, at Downing College, Cambridge.

This used to be an annual event but, to make it even more special, we decided to run it just once every two years. The 2012 conference is the first of our new biennial style – so, if you miss this one, you'll have to wait another two years!

Our conference is entitled Examining Risk. In the light of speculation over the future of England's qualification/assessment systems, concern over errors in exam papers, new approaches to regulation, and so on, this theme seemed to be spot on. I hope you'll think so too and I hope that our programme will persuade you to join us for what will definitely prove to be a stimulating and thought-provoking day.

You can find the programme, and register too, on Cambridge Assessment Conference 2012 website.

Hope to see you there and feel free to forward this message to your colleagues and friends.

Best wishes

Paul  
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## A word from the President

Good news! In this edition, we are pleased to welcome the new AEA Europe Newsletter Editor, Amina Afif, who officially replaces Julie Sewell after a long outstanding vacancy for this post. Amina is a member of the new Publication Committee chaired by Gill Stewart. One of the committee's first tasks is to reflect upon and define a publication strategy for the AEA. Should you have any ideas in strengthening the identity of the AEA through publication of its work, please feel free to contribute your views to the committee members during the upcoming conference in Limassol.

The AEA intends to improve the content and frequency of its newsletter in future. We hope to be able to count on all of our members to share news about their work which we plan to publish in regular or special thematic issues more than twice a year, depending of course on the number of articles received.

This autumn was spent organizing and planning the next two annual AEA conferences in Limassol and Prague. We are putting the finishing touches to our conference in Limassol where we will meet in warm and welcoming (in more than one way) Cyprus. To a Norwegian, this will feel like having an extra summer holiday. The programme looks as exciting as ever. As we say each time, we received even more submissions this year compared to the one before. There is a growing interest in our association, and I hope we can convince those who attend their first or second AEA conference to become regular members and return year after year, as so many do. All across Europe, considerable interesting work is being undertaken and we can learn much from one another. I will cite here a simple example. Coming from a culture that relies heavily on teacher assessment and one that trusts teachers, I find it interesting to observe and learn how teacher assessment is moderated in other countries. For assessment cultures like mine, teacher moderation, at first glance, seems to be rooted in a lack of trust teachers. Looking deeper into the established mechanisms, however, I think that it could also mean that teachers are given the opportunity to develop common criteria and an understanding of what it means to master curricula goals across classrooms and schools. This goal is something we would like to achieve and learn to do without taking away any of the autonomy given to our teachers. I am looking forward to discussing this and other interesting topics with you all in Limassol!

This is also the last time I am writing the 'President's Word' for the AEA Europe Newsletter. As my term comes to an end at the close of our conference in Limassol, I will step down and confidently hand over to Thierry Rocher, who will be the AEA Europe President for the coming two years. Together with him and Jannette Elwood, our new Vice-President and president elect, the AEA council will steer us safely through the next years, prepare upcoming conferences, handle the budget and all other businesses of AEA Europe as well as build new platforms for the association. Busy times lie ahead but I am optimistic that the council will comfortably sail through. I will certainly miss working with my colleague AEA Europe council members — intelligent, warm, giving and enthusiastic individuals who, over time, have become my friends and with whom I have shared many decisions. I will definitely miss having these interactions with them. I fully trust that they have in mind the best interest of all AEA Europe members, including mine, and I wish them nothing but the very best for the next two years.

## Contributions & Deadlines

The AEA-Europe Publications and Communications Committee would like to make a call for contributions for the Association's newsletter. The Newsletter is published twice a year, in the Spring and Autumn, with deadline dates in mid-February and mid-August. We would like help from members to make the information as up to date and relevant as possible. In particular we would like the following:

- Articles for the *Work in progress* section. These should be a maximum of 500 words long and be formatted under the headings "Context", "What is happening", "Why inform members" and "More information" (brief details of a website or references). Please see previous newsletters for more information.
- Articles for the *Doctoral students' Work in progress* section. These should also be 500-600 words long and follow a similar format, covering the research and the context, with some details of methodology, potential impacts or directions.
- *What's new* section: Information on conferences and courses at master and PhD-level. For conferences we need to know: Title, date, place, website address. For courses at master and PhD-level we would like information on courses relating to assessment open to international students, bearing in mind any language constraints. We will need the name of the institution, the title for the course in your own language as well as in English, plus dates, town, country, website or a contact address.
- *Members' news*: any information on new appointments, promotions, etc. We would also like some additional AEA-Europe national representatives who would be willing to send information about recent developments in assessment in their countries and approach relevant people to contribute to the *Work in progress* section. Please let Julie (e-mail address below) know if you would be interested in this role. We already have some volunteers but need more!

Julie Sewell (on behalf of the Publications and Communications Committee)  
AEA-Europe