



OXFORD UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Annual Report 2009-10



Centre postgraduate researchers Shan Huang and Velda Elliott discussing research with Gordon Stanley, the Director and Pearson Professor of Educational Assessment.



Foreword

The creation of the Pearson Chair in Educational Assessment and the Pearson funded Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment has been one of the most imaginative initiatives in the University in recent years. Two of the most famous educational brands in the world have come together to establish a research centre of international authority which is designed to offer a global perspective on how to secure trustworthy assessment of educational attainment worldwide.

The Centre has been built up in only two years by Professor Gordon Stanley to provide a forum for international academic discussion and to be a cross roads for international research collaboration. Professor Stanley is now retiring after having created the foundations for a Centre which his successor, thanks to the close working relationship between Oxford and Pearson, can develop into a resource for academics and practitioners alike.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tim Gardam.'.

Tim Gardam
Chair, Joint Advisory Board

Director's Report

Establishing a new research centre in educational assessment has been a privilege and a challenge. The role of educational assessment in the accountability agenda of modern governments means that there is a very important international focus on assessment and how it can operate fairly and transparently without corrupting and distorting the educational process.

The issue of reliability and validity of educational assessments in a standards-referenced environment has been quite central to the issues that the Centre and I have been engaged with during this second year of operation. This has been reflected in presentations, publications and the various projects undertaken by our research students.

Education reform inevitably leads to questions about how we measure outcomes in relation to standards nationally and internationally. Are better grades due to better understanding or have the goalposts been shifted to make it easier to succeed? At all stages of educational assessment professional judgment has to discern the appropriateness of the data being used to draw conclusions about the progress of education systems and of students within them.

This second annual report details the achievements of the last year and outlines some of the future developments which hopefully will be able to build significantly on the work begun.

For me one of the most interesting developments over the past year has been the opportunity to gain insights into education reform in Saudi Arabia. The current King has a strong commitment to the reform and development of educational opportunities in his kingdom. In October 2009 I was part of an international delegation arranged by Professor Lee Sing Kong to participate in the Middle East Workshop on Reform of Public Education in Arab Countries held at King Saud University in Riyadh.

Following on from this meeting a roundtable meeting on system level assessment models was organised between our Oxford Centre and the Tatweer Project for Developing Public Education. It was held in Riyadh in January of this year. Our exchanges and discussions have led to discussions about opportunities for future collaborative research.

Our June 2010 Invitational Roundtable on Managing Curriculum and Assessment Change at System Level involved a small group working together over two days to discuss similarities and differences in responses to curriculum and assessment reform. It brought together people with working experience of changes in Australia, Wales, Northern Ireland, Norway, Chile and Saudi Arabia with an aim to develop a framework for understanding how curriculum and assessment reform interacts with political, institutional and legal dimensions and how international comparisons of standards are driving reform agendas.

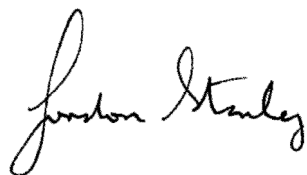
It has been stimulating to be involved in events bringing together the Pearson plc family to consider global education standards. Given the range of experience within Pearson plc from its array of companies and divisions engaged world-wide in developed and developing education systems, the organisation has unique capabilities to inform and engage with the emerging demand for globally recognisable education outcomes.

On the 16th October the Pan-Pearson Standards and Assessment Seminar was held in the Garden Room at 15 Norham Gardens which brought together senior people from Edexcel, Pearson Educational Measurement, Pearson Vue, Pearson Learning Solutions, Pearson Language Tests and the Oxford Centre to discuss how standards were being understood and implemented in the different contexts in which people were providing educational assessment services. It was a useful and lively seminar which helped generate a better understanding of the various capabilities and resources within the umbrella of Pearson plc. A larger conference to develop and build on this experience was held at St Hugh's College Oxford on 25th and 26th March.

The Centre was represented by Jim Tognolini at the Pearson Psychometric Summit held in Colorado in May. Out of these events is a recognition of valuable opportunities to understand and promote research and development which can lead to close working relationships between the Centre at Oxford and also Centres supported by Pearson at VU University in Amsterdam, University of Texas at Austin and the University of Western Australia.

Vicky Hayman left us in November to take up a professional research position elsewhere in the University. Fortunately Joanne Hazell who has had a lot of research administrative experience in the Department of Education here was available to take over from Vicky in a smooth transition. I feel we have been well served by each person who has provided great personal and professional support during the early days of the Centre.

My tenure of the position of Director and Inaugural Pearson Professor of Educational Assessment draws to a close in September with my retirement. I would like to thank all those colleagues who have been involved with us for their support and encouragement. The Department of Education and St Anne's have provided me with a rewarding and stimulating environment and I will cherish fond memories of my stay in Oxford.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gordon Stanley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'G'.

Gordon Stanley
Director and Pearson Professor of Educational Assessment
Research Fellow of St. Anne's College

Research Themes

The following research themes form the focus of activities within the Centre:

- Developing and enhancing theories and models of educational assessment to help better understand different types of learning processes, resource use and outcomes in various educational systems and international contexts.
- Understanding how educational assessment is perceived and utilised by the various stakeholders within different educational systems. How perceptions vary and how they are changing overtime.
- Building a systematic appreciation of how assessment has shaped, or is shaped by, policy and practice in the various educational sectors, subject domains and international contexts.
- Evaluating how different types and modes of assessment influence the effectiveness of learning processes and systems – the relevance and functional impact of different forms of assessment in supporting learning. Factors shaping the uptake of different types of assessment and how assessment might better respond to learning objectives, curriculum design and different qualification regimes.
- Educational Measurement and Informatics and the contribution of enhanced information to validity, reliability and the functionality of assessment systems. The impact and opportunities of information to enhancing formative and summative assessment in different educational settings.
- Notions of validity, reliability and ‘standards’ in different types of educational assessment and the link between the nature of assessment and standing and reputation of qualifications.
- Impacts and opportunities offered by new assessment technologies in test design, test distribution, administration and results delivery. The impact and opportunities of e-learning and e-assessment in different educational settings.
- How the use and application of psychometrics is changing the face of educational and work-based assessment and its impact on life-long learning and personal development

Key Activities and Events 2009-10

October 2009

The Director gave a paper *Improving Educational Outcome in the United Kingdom* at The Middle East Roundtable held at King Saud University 11-13 October 2009.



Gordon Stanley talking with students at the Preparatory Year College at King Saud University, Riyadh in October 2009 during a visit after the Workshop on Reform of Public Education.

January 2010

As part of Ofqual's Reliability Programme, a seminar for experts in assessment was held on 27th January at Warwick University. Professor Stanley talked on reliability in vocational education.

February 2010

A Roundtable meeting on system level assessment models was organised between the Centre and the Tatweer Project for Developing Public Education in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Professor Stanley and colleagues from the University of California, Berkeley, Queen's University, Belfast and the Office of the Board of Studies NSW participated in this meeting, which was held in Riyadh 1-4 February.

March 2010

A Pan Pearson Conference on Standards and Assessment took place 25-26 March at St Hugh's College, Oxford.

Professor Stanley gave a keynote address, *Meeting the Challenges Confronting Education Systems in the Quest to Create Global Qualifications and Standards*, at the Australian Higher Education Congress in Sydney on 10th March.

May 2010

David Andrich from The University of Western Australia has been appointed Visiting Professor of Educational Assessment. He was based at the Centre for a month over May/June and led a workshop on Rasch modelling.

June 2010

An invitational roundtable on *Managing Curriculum and Assessment Change at System Level* was held in Oxford on 9-10 June. Experts with experience in the following countries presented: Australia, Wales, Northern Ireland, Norway, Chile and Saudi Arabia.



Maria Teresa Florez presenting her paper at the June 2010 Invitational Roundtable on Managing Curriculum and Assessment Change at System Level.

Professor Stanley gave invited papers on *Global Ranking of Universities is a Distraction from Proper Competition* and *Challenges in the Quest to Create Global Qualifications and Standards are Driving Change in Education Systems* at the 'Drivers from Higher to Quality Education International Conference' organised by Lazarski University in Warsaw on 18-19 June.

An invited Pearson Roundtable on Assessment was hosted by the Centre on 28th and 29th June.

Professor Jim Tognolini, President of Research and Assessment, Pearson and Senior Research Fellow at Oxford University visited the Centre for a month in June.

August 2010

An Executive Seminar on Validating Standards-Referenced Results was held at the Centre on 19th and 20th August. Experts from Australia, Botswana, South Africa and the UK participated in the seminar, which was jointly led by Professors Gordon Stanley and Jim Tognolini. The programme centred on assessment at system level for understanding student progress and system performance.

Publications

Most of the following publications are downloadable at www.education.ox.ac.uk/assessment.

Stanley, G. & MacCann, R.G. (2009) Incorporating industry specific training into school education: enrolment and performance trends in a senior secondary system, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 61(4), 459-466.

MacCann, R.G. & Stanley, G. (2009) Item banking with embedded standards, *Practical Assessment Research & Evaluation*, 14(17), available online at <http://pareonline.net>.

Stanley, G., MacCann, R., Gardner, J., Reynolds, L. & Wild, I. (2009) *Review of Teacher Assessment: Evidence of What Works Best and issues for Development*, Report commissioned by QCA.

Stanley, G. & Lee, J.C. (2010) Future Educational Reform Policies and Measures, in: J.C. Lee & B. Caldwell (Eds) *Changing Schools in an Era of Globalization* (New York, Routledge).

MacCann, R.G. & Stanley, G. (2010) Extending participation in standard setting: an online judging proposal, *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 22, 139-157.

MacCann, R.G. & Stanley, G. (2010) Classification consistency when scores are converted to grades: examination marks versus moderated school assessments, *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 17(3), 255-272.

Posters presented

The following posters were presented at the Department of Education Graduate Research day in October 2009.

- Manzil Maqsood: *Formative E-assessment in Primary Classrooms of Pakistan*
- Shan Huang: *Factors Influencing the Stability and Instability of International Ranking in Higher Education*
- Velda Elliott: *The Application of Tversky and Kahneman's Theory of Heuristics and Biases to Examiners' Decision Making*
- Yanhong Li: *Grade Inflation*

New Staff



Jo has worked in a research support capacity in the Department of Education since 2002. Before joining the Centre for Educational Assessment in December 2009, she worked for over five years managing the *Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training* research project based in the Department.



Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment
Department of Education
University of Oxford
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford
OX2 6PY

Phone: +44 (0)1865 284098

Fax: +44 (0)1865 274027

Email: admin.oucea@education.ox.ac.uk

Website: www.education.ox.ac.uk/assessment

August 2010