

## International Educational Assessment Network (IEAN)

The International Educational Assessment Network (IEAN) was established at the end of May, 2018. The small nations/states include: Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Iceland, Denmark, Switzerland, Slovenia, New Zealand, Ontario (Canada), Norway, and Singapore.

Recently our president, Dr Jenny Poskitt, was the New Zealand research representative at IEAN. Jenny wrote up some notes that give us insights into common issues faced by member countries. Below are the notes she took that you might find interesting.

The purpose of the small nations meeting was to discuss 'wicked assessment problems' from the perspective of research and policy – hence each nation was invited to have one researcher and one policy representative in attendance.

### **Synthesis of discussions**

#### **1. Internationally, countries share issues of:**

- a. inequitable achievement and persistent poverty-low attainment link
- b. insufficient investment in teachers, generally low assessment literacy and eroded professional identity
- c. concerns about trustworthy data regarding achievement and progress
- d. lack of clarity about what is expected in the curriculum and assessments
- e. uncertainty about how to assess important values and capabilities for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning (associated issues of human well-being, harnessing affordances of digital technologies while minimising associated risks to privacy and security)

#### **2. What might we focus on to improve?**

- a. Build teacher confidence through
  - i. connecting curriculum, pedagogy, learning and assessment
  - ii. deepening teacher capability (assessment literacy and data analysis; curriculum and content knowledge)
  - iii. involving them in dialogue (with each other, students, researchers, PLD, MOE...)
- b. Build bridges to learning
- c. Innovation – through sharing power and control,
  - i. Initiate conversations between policy makers, policy influencers and policy enactors
- d. Prioritise teacher judgments (Scotland, Ireland, Canada, Ireland do)
- e. Resource with time for quality teacher PD and collegial conversations about learning

#### **3. How might we get there?**

- a. Learn from reforms elsewhere e.g. Wales, Norway current reforms
- b. Align purpose of assessment with intended use (clear purpose, assessment integral to learning, information used to inform current and future practice)

- c. Sustain change at national level
  - i. Build levers and networks – establish quality dialogue across policy makers, policy influencers and policy makers e.g. engage research community with assessment for learning; build political commitment through evidence
  - ii. Build collective purpose, passion and interdependence across improved learning and assessment
- d. Co-develop (with researchers, teachers, PD providers, employers, young people), authentic, fit for purpose assessments
- e. Become more sophisticated about what counts as evidence beyond narrowness of achievement to enthusiasm for, and skills in, learning; capture the learning process
- f. Create culture of respectful challenge, centrality of dialogue where all involved are learning together for mutual benefit
- g. Foster agency and quality learning within and across the system through sufficient structures/process(es) that enable people and ideas to interact, but is not prescriptive (and therefore restricting) It is in the open spaces that new ways/ideas emerge
- h. Realise every player in the system needs to build capability around assessment – not only teachers. However, teachers are at the 'chalk face' with students and the community so investing in teachers is a priority.
- i. Enable teacher agency, such as making judgments, by prioritising investment in teachers:
  - i. what: PLD on assessment, curriculum and pedagogy
  - ii. how: opportunities and time for professional conversations/dialogue on/about assessment that enables powerful learning
  - iii. with whom: colleagues, other stakeholders in education; parents/learners
  - iv. clarity about the why (value/worth of assessment as the yeast/agent for learning)

#### 4. So what are we doing?

The 11 participating countries divided into three smaller groups. New Zealand is a member of a grouping with Scotland and Singapore who are meeting (virtually) 2-3 monthly to explore how we might nationally and **collectively build professional capability and capacity in assessment.**