

CEA staff members present conference papers

Posted on 29 May 2012



Dr Vanessa Scherman and Dr Caroline Long presented papers at the Conference on Education Standards, organised by Umalusi, the quality council for general and further education and training, in May 2012.

Setting standards and teachers' professional development: Unpacking collective learning

Dr Vanessa Scherman, an NRF-rated researcher from the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment and senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria's Groenkloof Campus, presented a paper entitled "Setting standards and teachers' professional development: Unpacking collective learning". The paper was written by Dr Scherman in collaboration with Prof Sarah Howie, director of the CEA, Dr Lisa Zimmerman, also a senior researcher at the CEA, and Prof Roel Bosker of the University of Groningen.

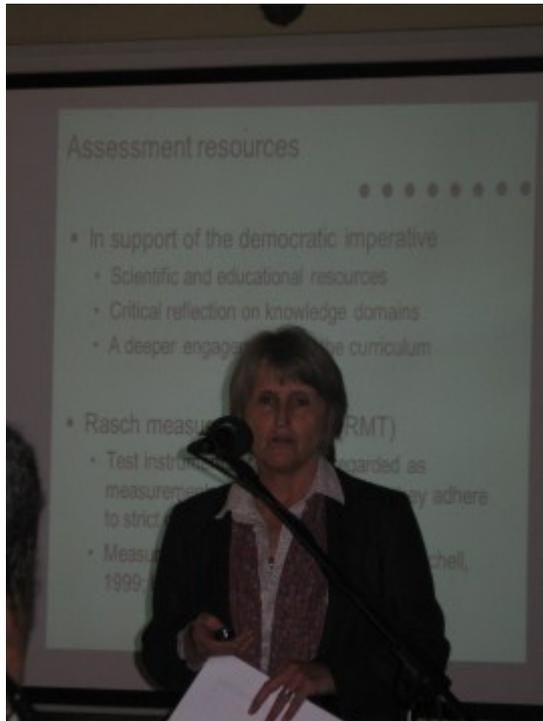
The main aim of the paper was to explore how standard setting exercises contributed to teachers' professional development, looking particularly at how assessment practices are approached and how these standards are articulated for reporting purposes. The paper is based on a standard-setting exercise conducted with teachers from 43 Gauteng schools participating in a school-based monitoring system known as the South African Monitoring System for Primary Schools (SAMP).



Accessible assessments: potentially a powerful instrument for class-room teaching and learning mathematics in the South African context

Dr Caroline Long, a senior researcher of the CEA presented a paper entitled "Accessible assessments: potentially a powerful instrument for class-room teaching and learning mathematics in the South African context" written in collaboration with professor Tim Dunne, from the department of Statistical Sciences at the University of Cape Town and Mr Gabriel Mokoena, a junior researcher at the CEA, University of Pretoria.

The paper presented at the conference provides the rationale for a change of base in large-scale assessment programme. The rationale for this alternative approach is based on democratic imperatives of using assessment for informing teachers of plausible pathways for ALL learners. The powerful educational idea developed by Vygotsky (1962) that of a zone of proximal development (ZPD), together with the Rasch measurement model informed the analysis of a data set. The purpose of presenting some results and analysis was to demonstrate the power of a model for assessment that could make connections between external assessment and classroom needs, and so be of use to teachers.



Panel Discussion: ***Improving the standard of school education in South Africa***

Professor Sarah Howie, Director of the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) was part of a panel at the Umalusi Conference on Education Standards, together with Professor Brian O'Connell, Vice-Rector at the University of the Western Cape, Professor Renuka Vithal, Deputy Vice-Rector at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The panel discussion, chaired by Professor Crain Soudien from the University of Cape Town, was focussed on the question of improving the standards of education in South Africa. Should we construct our own sets of standards based on internal cultural and educational considerations, or should we retain links with the international community? The role that large-scale assessment plays in this debate was the focus of Professor Howie's presentation. She emphasised the importance of ensuring that we do not underestimate the abilities of South African learners and that we take seriously the benchmarks, descriptions of knowledge and skills at a particular level that our learners have achieved, in order to set incremental goals.

The co-presenters raised the issues of inequality in our South African education system and the importance of strategic decision making. The chair, Professor Soudien, noted the dangers of convergence of education systems to one common model that may be precipitated by international large-scale studies.

[<< Back to the news list](#)

Bookmark this page: