

ABSTRACT

'The best laid plans of mice and men...' – Factors affecting long-term examination impact

Policy-makers often place great hopes in the power of examinations to support changes in the curriculum. Is it reasonable to count on so much impact though or to expect it to endure?

This paper presents a long-term view of examination impact, taking as its starting point the aspirations of teams designing new examinations in countries gaining independence in the 1990s. It describes the challenges the teams faced when introducing new forms of assessment, and the skills and mechanisms they had to develop in order to convince stakeholders of the worth of their vision. It discusses the challenges arising once new examinations became the 'status quo', and the difficulties of balancing academic considerations such as validity and reliability with real-world issues such as limited resourcing, competing priorities and politics at various levels.

BIO-DATA

Dr Dianne Wall is a specialist in language test design and evaluation, with a particular interest in the washback of high-stakes tests on teaching. She has served as a trainer and advisor to examination reform projects in many countries, and has carried out long-term washback studies in Europe and Asia. She is a co-author of *Language Test Construction and Evaluation*, and author of *The Impact of High-stakes Testing on Classroom Teaching*, and she has published widely on testing and its consequences. She is a retired member of the Department of Linguistics at Lancaster University, where she was a co-designer of the on-line MA in Language Testing. She was Director of Research at Trinity College London from 2008 to 2013. She is an Expert Member of the European Association of Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA).