Opening doors

The world’s biggest gathering of education ministers has heard about the power of education to open doors and transform lives.

In his talk at the Education World Forum in London, UK, Saul Nassé, Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment, spoke about how there are three doors that need to be unlocked to open up education opportunities: the teacher, the curriculum and technology.

“As education leaders, we know the transformative power of education,” he said.

“We also know the dangers of leaving the door shut on millions of young lives. When young people get left behind, the world pays the price. But by bringing together the three keys – curriculum, teachers and technology – it should help prevent the door of education from slamming shut on children whatever their circumstances.”

He spoke about how Cambridge has found a way to overcome the challenge of a lack of trained teachers, using a ‘train the trainers’ model which has already proved successful in Kazakhstan.

“If these types of partnerships can be strengthened globally, there is no reason why the world cannot meet...
**News in brief**

**Top Doc**

Dr Hanan Khalifa, Director, Education Transformation and Alliances at Cambridge Assessment English, has been named as one of the top Egyptian international education experts. Thirty Egyptian experts were honoured at a conference called *Egypt Can – by Education*, having been selected from a total of 36,000 Egyptian expatriate scientists living all over the world. Hanan shared the platform with, among many others, one of her personal inspirations, Dr Farouk El-Baz, an Egyptian-American space scientist who worked with NASA to assist in the planning of scientific exploration of the Moon. At the event, which was organised by the Ministry of Immigration and Egyptian Expatriates Affairs in Hurghada in cooperation with the Ministries of Education, Technical Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, she spoke about women in leadership and the latest trends in English language education.

**Recognition for ‘unsung hero’**

Chloe Shaw, Head of Alliance Management at Cambridge Assessment English (pictured centre right) has won an ‘Unsung hero’ award at the Women in International Education awards in Berlin. The awards are run by Lead 5050 and the Global Leadership League, both organisations supporting women in the international education industry and helping them reach positions of leadership. Chloe’s nomination was supported by many of her colleagues, who submitted statements celebrating, among other things, her authentic and collaborative leadership style. Chloe won the award in part for her work on diversity and inclusion, including the establishment of a Women in Leadership staff network, which aims to support women at any level as they move through their careers at Cambridge Assessment.

Chloe said: “I’m so delighted to have been recognised in this way and hugely touched by people’s messages and words of congratulation.”

**New Chief Executive for UK exam board OCR**

A new Chief Executive has been appointed at one of the UK’s leading exam boards.

Jill Duffy is the new Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment’s UK exam board OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA).

Jill led the UK schools business at education company Pearson for five years and was responsible for more than 450 staff across product management and development, marketing and sales, spanning qualifications, digital and print learning services. Prior to joining Pearson, Jill spent 22 years in educational publishing.

Saul Nassé, Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment, said:

“I am delighted that Jill has joined us. She is utterly immersed in the UK’s education landscape and has a deep understanding of what students, teachers and schools need now and in the future.

“Under Jill’s leadership, I am confident that OCR will increase its reach and impact and that she will nurture our fantastic teams in Coventry and Cambridge.”

Jill said: “I am delighted to join OCR. I appreciate fully the vital part that qualifications play in enabling learners to progress in their learning and lives, and am looking forward to working with the team at OCR and Cambridge Assessment as well as Cambridge University Press and the wider University.

“I am excited by the prospect of a role at the heart of the UK educational system and by the opportunity to provide the very best assessment experience for teachers and learners, built on unique research capabilities, a commitment to teachers and learners, and a preeminent education brand.”

Jill joined OCR at the end of last year, taking over from interim Chief Executive Janet Morris, who returned to her role as International Network Director at Cambridge Assessment International Education, after delivering a successful OCR summer series.

Jill began her career in education as an editor at Oxford University Press and subsequently worked for publishers including Hodder & Stoughton, Harcourt, and Ginn. She has a Post Graduate Certificate in Education from Oxford University and a BA in English Literature from Oxford’s Trinity College.
“As education leaders, we know the transformative power of education.”

the United Nations commitment to deliver primary and secondary school education to every child by 2030 – and open up access to education for millions,” he said.

He then went on to talk about the second ‘key’, curriculum, citing as an example how Fairdale High School in Louisville, Kentucky, USA, chose the Cambridge International curriculum through a desire to improve access to higher education and raise standards for all students. Just five years after adopting Cambridge programmes, every single one of Fairdale’s Cambridge students has gone on to further or higher education.

Lastly, Saul addressed the final ‘key’, technology, which he said “should not be in the hands of big corporations but in the hands of learners”. He spoke about Diego Cordova from Guatemala, the youngest recipient of the Internet Society’s 25 under 25 Award. Diego, who has been interested in technology since he first discovered an old tablet at the age of 10, helps out at a local Non-Governmental Organisation called Mundo Posible, taking online educational material to some of the most rural communities in Guatemala.

Saul said that Diego’s example proved that education technology is “not all about expensive iPads or high-speed broadband”.

“Low cost interventions [like this] are democratising and opening up educational content for millions, creating access in the most difficult to reach communities,” he said.

Saul ended his talk by calling on ministers to collaborate to overcome educational inequalities and improve access. “As we walk out the doors of this conference hall, let’s work together,” Saul said. “Work together to unlock the doors. Work together to unleash the potential of the world’s children.”

The theme of this year’s event was “What we should do with what we know: Developing education policy for implementation, impact and exponential success”. This year once again, Cambridge Assessment International Education, Cambridge Assessment English and Cambridge University Press were Platinum Partners for the event under the Cambridge brand.

Evidence is everything

Lee Crawford

Evidence-based policy has become somewhat of a catchphrase in politics. Everybody’s for it and nobody’s against it. But of course there’s evidence and there’s evidence. Anybody can find a study proving their point – but not everyone can find good studies that prove their point.

This is where the discipline of education economics has much to teach mainstream education research. While descriptive studies can be useful for generating hypotheses, economics brings a strongly quantitative approach and a set of methodological tools for establishing the causal relationships between variables and outcomes.

Since the spring of 2014, the Centre for Education Economics (CfEE) has been producing an (almost) Monthly Research Digest, intended to give interested parties a direct view into the policies and practices that rigorous economic research suggests work, and do not work, in education.

Now, with support from Cambridge Assessment, the Centre has launched a new and improved version of the Digest. I have taken on the role of Deputy Editor, with a view to beefing up the section on research from low- and middle-income economies.

‘Developing’ countries (those below the $12,000 per capita income threshold for rich countries) make up 36 per cent of the world economy, but 83 per cent of the world’s population, and 87 per cent of the world’s school pupils.

The barriers to educational success that many countries face, even at the level of basic competency, often seem intractable, and their scale overwhelming.

Against this often dismal backdrop, research, at least, is progressing. Reports on studies of interventions in developing countries are increasingly represented in the top economics journals. Randomised control trials are on the rise, in part due to the relatively low cost of monitoring experimentation at scale in the developing world context.

Better understanding of where to prioritise reform efforts is critical in developing countries. In the Digest we aim to make the latest research more readily available and accessible for educators, researchers, and policymakers alike. If you are not already a subscriber, do sign up on the CfEE website. The first issue is out now.

Lee Crawford is a CfEE Fellow. He is Strategic Advisor at the Rwanda Ministry of Education and the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. He is also a PhD candidate in education economics at the University of Sussex, and has worked on global education policy as a civil servant, consultant, and researcher.

Don’t lean on PISA

Policymakers should guard against uncritical use of PISA international test results, according to research.

The findings were published as the latest round of PISA testing in UK schools and globally is drawing to a close, with the results expected this December.

Cambridge Assessment compared individual pupil achievement on PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) with the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education).

The researchers, Dr Matthew Carroll and Dr Tom Benton, acknowledge that the two assessments have different purposes: PISA focuses on the performances of whole countries, while GCSEs are designed to test individual pupils’ knowledge. But they say that understanding the links between performances on the two assessments is important, not least because it helps us understand the extent to which performance in PISA reflects the success or otherwise of the UK’s school system.

As an example, the researchers found that the correlation between performance on the PISA reading test and in GCSE English is not particularly high. In fact, performance on the PISA reading test is at least as closely aligned with achievement in GCSE science (correlation of 0.69) as it is with GCSE English (0.68).

When the researchers then viewed published PISA questions they found that several asked students to read and interpret tables or figures of scientific information, a skill that is more often a feature of GCSE science than GCSE English.

The researchers note however that in England, GCSE English forms a fundamental part of the way that school performance is judged, and there is a strong focus on teaching essay-writing skills.

“However, it is clear that when it comes to judging the performance of our education system as a whole using PISA, essay-writing is not measured,” the researchers say.

“Thus the performance of England’s education system is judged whilst ignoring some of the key skills that schools are trying to teach.”

The study also shows how PISA performance of students can differ depending upon their GCSE subject choices. For example, even amongst those with equally good attainment in maths GCSE, students who studied separate sciences performed much better in PISA maths than those who had studied combined science.
Vietnam signs Cambridge agreement

Vietnam’s Ministry of Education and Training has signed Memoranda of Collaboration with Cambridge Assessment.

Prof Dr Phùng Xuân Nha, Vietnam’s Minister of Education and Training, visited Cambridge with a delegation of leading Vietnamese universities, schools and education companies for a full-day meeting in Cambridge. The event focused on collaboration between Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press, with the aim of enhancing support for the country’s ambitious education reforms.

The Minister said that Cambridge and the Ministry will explore ways to improve the effectiveness of English language teaching, including the teaching of other subjects through the medium of English. The collaboration will consider the introduction of international qualifications for learners and teachers, as well as a programme of training, seminars and conferences on the teaching, learning and assessment of English.

The Ministry’s publishing arm, Vietnam Education Publishing House, will work with Cambridge University Press to share expertise across a number of areas, including the development of textbooks and other publications and digital education projects.

Cambridge Assessment and the Press support educational reform programmes all over the world, and have a long track record in Vietnam. Hundreds of thousands of teachers and learners in Vietnam have taken Cambridge English examinations, while Cambridge Assessment International Education works in partnership with more than 30 leading public and private schools across the country.

At the event, Cambridge Assessment and the Press also signed a Memorandum of Collaboration with Prof Dr Hoang Minh Son, Vice Chancellor of Hanoi University of Science and Technology, the largest Vietnamese university in the science and technology sector, in order to collaborate on the recognition of Cambridge English Qualifications and Cambridge International AS & A Levels.

Creating the conditions for success

Leading education experts offered their unique insight into how schools can provide a successful environment at a recent conference in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Based on the theme ‘Creating the conditions for success’, the Cambridge Schools Conference focused on establishing a positive, successful learning environment in schools worldwide, exploring topics such as wellbeing, social-emotional learning, mindfulness and developmental disorders in the classroom.

Speakers included Valerie Hannon, former Director of Education for Derbyshire County Local Education Authority in the UK, Professor Amanda Kirby, doctor and experienced researcher and clinician, and Professor Jonathan Glazzard from Leeds Beckett University, UK.

Amy Burke and Kevin Hawkins, lead teacher trainer and experienced researcher and clinician, and Professor Jonathan Glazzard from Leeds Beckett University, UK.

Akash Raut, a teacher from DSB International School, Mumbai, India, said: “The Cambridge Schools Conference held a special significance as it helps me think about teaching, learning and assessment of English. The Ministry’s publishing arm, Vietnam Education Publishing House, will work with Cambridge University Press to share expertise across a number of areas, including the development of textbooks and other publications and digital education projects.

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Students from Cambridge schools in Sri Lanka took part in a panel discussion at the conference.
Teachers Know How... to tackle recruitment and retention

A multinational audience has heard how harnessing a German apprentice-style model of teacher training could boost teacher retention in England.

Delegates gathered at Cambridge Assessment’s new global headquarters, Triangle, to debate the contested issue of the nature of teacher expertise and the implications of this for teacher training.

The Cambridge Assessment Network seminar was hosted by Professor Christopher Winch of King’s College London, an experienced teacher who has worked in further, primary and higher education. Drawing on his ground-breaking analysis in his book Teachers Know How, he outlined three different conceptions of teacher: craftworker, executive technician, and professional. These models are often implicit in national arrangements for teacher development. Each model has very specific implications for both training and practice – and rather than be invisible assumptions, his work emphasizes the extent to which the guiding model in a system should be explicit, making policy decisions and action more deliberate and effective.

Briefly, ‘craftworker’ teachers rely on subject knowledge, experience, character and situational judgement for their effectiveness, whereas ‘executive technician’ teachers rely on following protocols developed by curriculum and pedagogic specialists, and ‘professional’ teachers tend to exercise judgement on the basis of subject knowledge, a good conceptual grasp of the field of education and knowledge of empirical research about teaching and learning.

These different aspirations of effectiveness are inevitably supported by different approaches to teacher training. Professor Winch explained, although, he argued, both the ‘craftworker’ and ‘executive technician’ models could have a limited degree of success. However, if we want to attain the highest standards we need to embark on an incremental direction change in how teacher education is provided in England to encourage the development and eventual dominance of the professional model.

One of the suggested direction changes saw Professor Winch unpack an apprenticeship-style model of teacher training from Germany, which sees stronger links between the university phase of teacher education and their going into the classroom. One drawback to this particular model as it currently operates in Germany is that it is subject to high dropout rates during the practical training stages. However, he keenly stressed that teachers who did finish the course were much more likely to stick with the profession, with even some level of social disapproval attached to those who choose to leave teaching in Germany.

The event was hosted by four Members of the European Parliament who are strong advocates of multilingualism: Michaela Šojdrová, Silvia Costa, Nils Torvalds and Svetoslav Malinov, and included contributions from the European Commission and policymakers and academics from around Europe.

The live audience included this year’s international delegation from the Cambridge Assessment Network’s annual Leadership in National Assessment programme as well as a hundreds-strong online viewership, watching from countries including Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, Romania, and Somalia.
Switching on to edtech

Educators, parents, businesses in IT and government bodies came to learn about innovative products in education at a recent expo in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Cambridge Assessment International Education partnered with Cambridge University Press to participate in EduTECH Africa 2018 in October last year.

Mark Barber, Cambridge International’s Senior Manager, Southern Africa, was on hand to talk to schools about the Cambridge Pathway, while Cambridge University Press showcased its publications and digital learning products.

Alan Vesty, Market Development Manager: Digital, Cambridge University Press, was impressed with the quality of the expo: “With over 3000 visitors and 80 stands, this is a major edtech event in the region. We were delighted to share space with our colleagues from Cambridge International and show schools how we are working together to support their needs.

We talked about the exciting new digital resources being developed by Cambridge University Press and Cambridge International."

Education pilot takes off in Cyprus

The Ministry of Education in Cyprus has set up a pilot project with Cambridge Assessment English to give state school students more access to English language learning and assessment materials.

A sample of students and schools will take part in the programme, which will be up and running in the next academic year. It will include a benchmarking test for first year students and the chance for students in the third grade of secondary school to take the Cambridge B1 Preliminary for Schools exam.

Students taking the qualification will get access to official English language preparation materials from Cambridge University Press and Cambridge Assessment English, while teachers preparing students for the exam will get access to a programme of seminars.

"We talked about the exciting new digital resources being developed by the Press and Cambridge International. Our book series, Approaches to Learning and Teaching – written in collaboration with Cambridge International – also attracted considerable interest from visiting teachers."

The event attracted delegates from South Africa and neighbouring countries, with visitors from as far afield as Ethiopia.

B1 Preliminary for Schools is an internationally recognised English language qualification developed by Cambridge English. It includes content that is targeted at school-aged students and shows that they have mastered the basics of English and have practical language skills for everyday use. It is targeted at level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference – an internationally recognised standard of language ability.

Interested students will also have the chance to take a Cambridge IGCSE examination, which is developed by Cambridge Assessment International Education.

Reality check

Functional Skills qualifications, which teach post-16 and adult learners in England how to apply practical maths and English skills to real-life and vocational contexts, must be genuinely grounded in the real world, research has found.

Researchers at Cambridge Assessment, the parent organisation of UK exam board OCR, investigated the use of context in existing Functional Skills English and maths exam papers across a number of different awarding organisations.

The research highlighted the need for Functional Skills exam questions to be based on purposeful tasks that are anchored in the real world and that enable students to use their subject knowledge meaningfully.

The research found that while existing Functional Skills exam questions were inspired by the real world, many questions were not genuinely grounded in ‘real life’, for example, presenting students with three birds and asking them to choose the longest. These types of questions are ‘School English/maths’ rather than ‘Functional English/maths’, as the only place a learner would actually encounter this type of question is in a classroom or an exam. In contrast, asking a student to calculate the size of a suitcase to check its suitability as hand luggage on a flight would help the learner to address a problem grounded in real life.

Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs) in English and maths are being reformed in the UK, and exam boards are set to introduce FSQs for first teaching in September 2019.

OCR has used the research findings to influence the design of its new Functional Skills English and maths exam papers. Its new questions will be based on real-life situations, allowing students to consider and apply solutions to practical issues they may face in the ‘real world’, and they are also designed to be accessible to a wide range of students.

To find out more about OCR’s new Functional Skills qualifications, to sign up for email updates or book onto a free online webinar, visit www.ocr.org.uk/fs.
An admission test has celebrated 15 years of helping medical schools around the world select students with the potential to succeed.

A celebration in Cambridge marked 15 years of the BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT). The test, developed by experts at Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, is used by universities around the world to help them select the students with the potential to succeed on demanding medical, dental and other related degrees.

The test started life as a collaboration between the universities of Cambridge and Oxford and Cambridge Assessment, and was developed to replace their existing medical admissions tests. It was first taken in 2003 by 4100 candidates who were applying to study at Cambridge, Oxford and University College London. Imperial College London adopted BMAT a few years later, and in the UK they were followed by Brighton & Sussex Medical School, University of Leeds and University of Lancaster. BMAT is now taken by tens of thousands of students hoping to get a place on healthcare-related courses around the world.

Speaking at the event to mark the occasion, Andy Chamberlain, Head of Admissions Testing at Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, said:

“We’re really proud of what BMAT has achieved over the last 15 years and it’s grown beyond all recognition from the early days. BMAT grew from its base in the UK and it’s now widely used internationally at universities in the Netherlands, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Kazakhstan and a growing number of European countries.”

The test is now used by more than 30 universities in 11 countries around the world, and students can take BMAT in around 100 countries at 2000 test centres.

Andy Chamberlain, Head of Admissions Testing at Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing.

US students most likely to use technology in the classroom

Students in the US are the most likely globally to use technology to complete assignments in the classroom, according to a recent survey.

Cambridge Assessment International Education surveyed almost 20,000 students and teachers across the world in its inaugural Global Education Census. The survey found that three out of four US students (74 per cent) now use their smartphones as educational aids in the classroom, compared to just two out of five students (42 per cent) globally. Similarly, 75 per cent of US students reported using a desktop computer in their classroom, while 59 per cent reported using a smartboard or interactive whiteboard.

“We wanted to understand not only what students learn, but how, and in what context, and to share these insights with the wider education community...”

The Global Education Census report focused on 10 key countries – the United States, China, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Indonesia and Argentina. The report is aimed at teachers, school leaders and parents around the world, and provides insights on a range of topics including use of technology in learning and teaching, subjects taught, extracurricular activities, student aspirations and teacher motivations.

The complete report can be found on the Cambridge International website at www.cambridgeinternational.org/edcensus.
25 years of collaboration

China’s National Education Examinations Authority (NEEA) has celebrated 25 years of collaboration with Cambridge Assessment English at a special meeting in Cambridge that brought together experts from both organisations.

Dr Han Yu, Vice-President of NEEA, was guest of honour in Cambridge along with 20 of his colleagues. During the last 25 years the two organisations have worked together to deliver English language qualifications in China, along with a number of high-profile research and academic projects. The partnership began in 1993 when the Cambridge English Business qualifications were offered in China through NEEA’s network, at a time when China recognised the importance of English language for business. The exams are now taken by hundreds of thousands of students every year in China.

Christine Nuttall, Interim Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment English, worked with NEEA in the early days of the collaboration. She said:

“Our mission at Cambridge Assessment English is to help people learn English and prove their skills to the world, and for more than two decades our Chinese partners at NEEA have been a big part of this.”

The representatives from NEEA took part in a two-week training programme, organised by the Cambridge Assessment Network, during which they met experts from across the organisation and focused on sharing expertise in assessment and exam reforms.

Group Chief Executive Saul Nassé and Dr Han Yu, Vice President of NEEA.

Language for all

Much of the language we use daily to communicate via social media or smartphones is very simple in comparison to that which we use in face-to-face interactions or in writing and reading. However, complex language remains vital to progress in many fields of human endeavour.

It is well known that children from disadvantaged backgrounds often start school with poorer language skills than their peers. In a forthcoming Cambridge Assessment Network seminar, ‘Acquisition of complex language in a changing society’, Professor Jane Mellanby from the University of Oxford will discuss how intervention in pre-school and school might work to expand the language skills of disadvantaged children.

To book a free space at the seminar in Cambridge on 15 May, please go to www.canetwork.org.uk/seminars.

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