

The NAHT has called for a CIEA accredited Lead Assessor in every school – why should I become a Lead Assessor?

(September 2022)

Introduction

At the National Association of Headteachers' (NAHT) Policy Conference in October 2021, the Conference unanimously carried a motion for the NAHT's national executive:

...to work with the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors to encourage every school to have a lead assessor and ensure members and the appropriate staff in their school can access the training provided by CIEA (NAHT, 2021. Accessed online).

This paper explains the background to this motion including calls for increased training, development and recognition of educational assessors together with a brief over-view of the Lead Assessor Award and the reasons why it is in the best interest of every school to have a Lead Assessor accredited by the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA).

Background to the NAHT motion

In introducing Motion 23 (NAHT, 2021) to Conference¹, Amanda Hulme (Chair of the NAHT Assessment and Accountability group and Headteacher, Claypool Primary School, Bolton) highlighted the impact of years of externally set high-stakes assessments that have resulted in narrowing of the curriculum. A similar view was expressed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI), Amanda Spielman (2018) who noted Ofsted's evidence:

.... of a decline in the quality of education ...in the narrowing of the curriculum in schools and an endemic pattern of prioritising data and performance results, ahead of the real substance of education (Spielman, 2018. Accessed online).

The NAHT motion draws attention to the limited professional development opportunities for teachers to develop and enhance their assessment skills, the results of which can be found in the negative impact on teacher workload in areas such as data handling and marking (See DfE(a), 2016 & DfE(b), 2016).

The lack of support and training for teachers in educational assessment and the need for high quality, rigorous and accurate assessment sits at the heart of Motion 23 and in proposing the motion to Conference, Amanda Hume noted:

Interestingly the government in the past has questioned our ability to assess accurately but has never offered support or training to the many thousands of teachers and leaders carrying out this role on a daily basis.

It is now time for the government to stop criticising and start supporting by providing funding for the development of independently accredited training for lead assessors in every school (NAHT, 2021. Accessed online).

The motion was passed unanimously and following further discussions between the NAHT and the CIEA, the Lead Assessor Support Programme has been established to deliver the Lead Assessor Award that will be widely available from September 2022.

A brief over-view of the Lead Assessor Award

The Lead Assessor Award is awarded to individuals who have completed the Lead Assessor Programme and submitted a maximum 1,000-word assignment outlining how they will implement the role of Lead Assessor in their own context which will be assessed by the CIEA.

The programme contains six modules and is designed to run over ten weeks to allow participants time to access the materials without causing undue or additional pressure on the workload of teachers, a point raised by headteacher David Merriman in an NAHT podcast describing his experience of taking the modules and taking part in the on-line tutorials:

... so you could work around your workload and pressures of everyday teaching and leading because we all have different days and times when we could access it and it was really nice to be able to have that freedom to do it over a window and knowing that it would be responded to, and you'd get a lot out of it (NAHT, 2022).

Participants have the option to complete the six modules at which time they will receive a Certificate of Attendance or go on to complete the assignment to achieve the Lead Assessor Award.

Having an independently accredited Lead Assessor demonstrates a school or Multi Academy Trust's (MAT) clear commitment to high quality assessment practice and the professional development and support of its staff. It also provides a step towards further CIEA qualifications including Chartered Educational Assessor (see CIEA, 2022).

The Lead Assessor Award is designed to enable those achieving the award to ensure the development of high-quality educational assessment practice in their school or MAT by:

- improving the validity and reliability of school-based assessment;
- enhancing teaching and learning, delivering tangible benefits for all pupils across the institution(s);

- raising the professional status of teachers by demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of effective educational assessment practice to governors, parents, Ofsted, and the wider community;
- ensuring the enacted school curriculum and assessment processes align with intended outcomes by providing insight into the quality of teaching and learning and the ways in which progression is achieved across the curriculum;
- reducing workload by ensuring that efficient, valid and reliable processes are used to measure and record pupils' attainment.

The Lead Assessor Award consists of the completion of six modules and the submission of a final assignment tailored to the context of either primary or secondary phases of education: all modules are offered online with expert tutorial support.

Registration & Launch: This introductory module prompts assessors to register for the online learning platform and get used to navigating around it so that they can access further modules. There is also a chance to introduce themselves to other participants and get to know the tutors. A short self-assessment survey and a few short pieces of reading completes this module.

Approaches to Assessment (primary) or The Validity Chain (secondary). This module introduces relevant aspects of validity with which anyone designing or carrying out assessments ought to be familiar: that is construct relevance, authenticity, manageability, fairness, bias, comparability, and reliability. By using relevant examples (primary or secondary), the module encourages participants to think about how to apply the theoretical principles in their own assessment context, and what that means in relation to the evidence they assess.

Standardisation & moderation. This module helps assessors to understand the importance of planning and implementing good procedures to set and maintain standards – within departments, year groups or courses as well as across a school or college. Getting this right is an essential part of ensuring fairness to all candidates.

Using Data: The fourth module explains how to understand, interpret and make best use of the various forms of data associated with assessments. When assessing students' work, or standardising staff to ensure consistency or moderating to ensure appropriate standards are applied, some data will be produced and making appropriate use of it is essential.

Leading the Assessment Process (primary) or Managing people (secondary). Getting all staff on board is the key to implementing effective quality assurance arrangements across a school or college. This module focuses on the skills related to effective people management and, crucially, successful change management. The crux is on developing and fostering good communication skills, behaviours and attitudes.

Feedback & Evaluation: This module gives participants an opportunity to reflect on their learning and what they have gained from the programme. The evaluation

includes a declaration for completion by participants who have fully engaged with all aspects of the programme and wish to self-certify and claim a Certificate of Attendance, rather than complete the assignment and claim the Lead Assessor Award (see below).

On completion of the six modules, participants have the option to receive a Certificate of Attendance (see above) or go on to complete the Lead Assessor Award by submitting a maximum 1,000-word assignment within one month of completing the modules outlining how they will implement the role of Lead Assessor in their own context. The assignment will be assessed by the CIEA.

The course allows for flexible access so that participants can manage their own time and is intended to support senior teachers in becoming CIEA accredited Lead Assessors to quality assure the assessment processes and working practices in their schools. Whilst this programme can be offered to individual teachers, it is beneficial and has greater impact if two or more teachers from a school or MAT undertakes the course together. This is a view strongly endorsed by David Merriman, headteacher, and Hannah Smith, deputy-headteacher at Gaddesdon Row JMI School in Hemel Hempstead, as Hannah explains:

I think the most valuable part for me was the video chat (tutorial), having that opportunity to speak with like-minded people, but also specialists. I also think it was really helpful doing it with someone from within your own school. I think having each other was really important. So, during those chats we would discuss what we were doing and bounce ideas off each other for people to respond back to us. I think it was almost invaluable having a colleague from within the school alongside who you could talk to (NAHT, 2022).

This provides an opportunity for colleagues to discuss and audit the assessment processes in their own setting and cascading high quality practice in educational assessment with a view to making positive change in their department, whole school or across the MAT.

Why it is in the best interest of every school to have a Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) accredited Lead Assessor.

In this section, I propose some of the key reasons as to why I believe that it is in the best interest of every school, and indeed every teacher, to engage with the Lead Assessor Award programme.

1. Better outcomes for pupils and schools through improved teaching and learning

The most important facet of high-quality educational assessment is its relationship with the teaching and learning process, but first, let me clarify my interpretation of the term 'educational assessment'. In the field of education, assessment has many purposes, indeed Newton (2007) identified over twenty different purposes ranging

from self-evaluation to national accounting. However, in the context of this paper, I am drawing on the work of James (2010) who defined educational assessment as:

... all those activities that involve eliciting evidence of student learning and drawing inferences as the basis for decisions (James, 2010, p.163).

Unfortunately, we can't see learning, and:

If students learned what they were taught, we would never need to assess; we could instead just keep records of what we had taught. But as every teacher knows, many students do not learn what they are taught. Indeed, when we look at their work, we sometimes wonder if they were even present in the classroom (William, 2011. Accessed online).

But all too often, educational assessment is viewed as something external, something done to people rather than used by people as the means by which we measure learning and show attainment, the impact of teaching and next steps.

However, all assessments have limitations that need to be recognised and understood and this has to be a part of any teachers skill set, but the extent to which we support and develop the expertise of teachers in the field of assessment is limited (Walker, 2020) leading to sometimes well intended but spurious and ineffective assessment practice such as the hours spent on collecting in-valid data or triple - marking pupils' work (see DfE(a) & DfE(b), 2016). Developing and formally recognising high levels of assessment knowledge in the teaching profession must become the norm in our schools as a means of improving outcomes for our pupils as William (2022) suggests:

...the evidence from the National Institute for economic and Social Research (NIES, 2018) confirms for me that right now helping teachers get better at minute by minute and day by day classroom formative assessment is the single most powerful way to improve outcomes with young people (William, 2022. Accessed online).

To be clear, external standardised assessments have an important role to play in our education system and, despite criticism from some quarters, we have access to some of the best developed and regulated tests and examinations in the world. However, we can always do better and providing teachers with the appropriate knowledge and skills to carry out valid and reliable assessments will not only provide a complementary or in some cases an alternative approach to external assessments, but it will also importantly increase the effectiveness of day to day, week by week teaching in our schools. As Amanda Hulme concluded:

We know that ongoing high-quality assessment is at the heart of effective teaching and learning. And however experienced we are in assessing our children we know that there is always something to learn. Working alongside the CIEA will provide us with the professional development we need to challenge the government's view once and for all (NAHT, 2021).

This view is emphasised by CIEA's Vice-chair Tim Sherriff, and until recently Headteacher of Westfield Community School, an Ofsted designated outstanding school in Wigan and a member of the Independent Review of Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability (Bew Review, 2011). In a recent blog for the CIEA, Tim wrote:

Despite the centrality of assessment in the teaching and learning process and in our system of qualifications and accountability, the development of understanding and expertise in educational assessment is too often overlooked. This is not the case at Westfield. We see the beneficial impact of high-quality educational assessment on our pupils' learning on a daily basis so developing expertise across our teaching staff has become a high priority (Sherriff, 2022).

2. To ensure the enacted school curriculum and the assessment processes align with intended outcomes by providing insight into the quality of teaching and learning and the ways in which progression is described - and achieved across the curriculum;

All too often the school curriculum and the ways in which we attempt to measure learning are divided into two separate entities with assessment being viewed as an add-on or something imposed by external agencies rather than being seen as integral to the teaching and learning process and recognition of attainment. Assessment is pivotal in the teaching and learning process be it in the minute-by-minute transactions in every classroom up and down the country or how we recognise attainment at various fixed points in our education system such as at the end of period of instruction or point of transfer, or through key stage tests, GCSE, BTEC and GCE A level examinations.

But educational assessment should also be deployed as a tool in helping to establish the key ideas or concepts we aim to measure in order to gauge the level of success in reaching the intended outcomes of the curriculum and ensuring progression in teaching and learning.

Following the removal of National Curriculum levels in 2014, I worked with Graham Herbert to produce the NAHT Assessment Framework. Whilst for me the term 'curriculum' describes all the intentions and activities taking place in a school, the framework focused on what we generally refer to as *subjects*. The approach involves an initial stage of agreeing the content or programme of study for each subject drawing on for example the National Curriculum which in practice only "...forms one part of the school curriculum" (DfE, 2014, p.4). The entire content of the programme of study should be discussed, understood and agreed by all those responsible for its delivery – and should not be viewed from an isolated perspective such as a particular year group.

This is followed by determining the key concepts, the big ideas or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as we described them in the NAHT Assessment Framework. In effect, the KPIs identify what we really want to instil in our pupils' minds as the building blocks of a progression in learning. It is these KPIs that form the focus of assessment. There should be no set number of KPIs, and the number can differ from

one year to the next, or from one subject to another. But they really should be key and once agreed, kept under review.

Clearly, this doesn't mean that we should in any way neglect the other components of a programme of learning, but we can't measure everything, and some of the things we see measured in schools do not give us the important insights into the extent to which key concepts have been internalised by our pupils. And all too often, the various approaches adopted by schools lack validity and efficiency and serve only to feed tracking systems that eat teachers' time for no demonstrable gains in pupils' learning.

Having agreed the KPIs, it is possible to then produce a broad description of expected performance to help communicate the intentions of a period of learning.

But it is also vital in my view to exemplify as best we can what the products of learning should look like at any given point – for example what we expect from a Year 3 mathematician compared with a Year 8 mathematician. Exemplars, be they written, spoken, performed or drawn are a means of communicating expected standards of performance for each KPI as otherwise we are dependent on words alone which are more open to differing interpretation. Building a portfolio of exemplar standards offers wider opportunities to convey expectations to teachers new to a school for example, or parents and guardians – and as a means of sharing and comparing with colleagues from other schools. It is also worth displaying the exemplars for each year group side by side as a means of looking at expectations as pupils move through the year groups – is progression visible? Is there unnecessary repetition and gaps in provision?

It is here the Lead Assessor comes into play. Having knowledge of how to identify assessment objectives, set standards and conduct moderation exercises is essential as all too often standardisation and moderation are used interchangeably or completely misunderstood. Setting KPIs, agreeing an expected standard of performance and ensuring colleagues apply that standard are essential ingredients of any approach to assessment.

None of this suggests that other approaches should not be used: it is up to schools and colleges to determine and justify their assessment regime. But whatever approach is adopted, it needs to be agreed and understood by every member of staff so that progression is articulated and visible and every teacher knows what comes next in a pupil's learning – and what should have come before. And where there are gaps in a child's grasp of key concepts, arrangements need to be put in place to address that gap – because these are key ideas, the building blocks of learning.

3. To improve self-evaluation and prepare for scrutiny

School leaders are expected to support the professional development of their staff and improving in-school expertise in educational assessment is possibly more relevant now than ever before. Developing approaches to assessment that can be shown to be cognisant of validity and reliability issues will play an important role in guiding learning needs post-pandemic and creating trusted profiles of pupil's progress when for example, testing at Key Stage 1 ceases to be a statutory

requirement, as pupils transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 or in courses leading to a qualification.

It is often a challenge to find a robust mechanism by which schools can evaluate the effectiveness of their provision. Performance measures are frequently based on the outcomes of externally set tests and examinations, but despite there being some attributes in making comparisons with the wider population of schools, the approach lacks a more nuanced, contextual analysis or focus on "...the real substance of education" (Spielman, 2018).

Inspections and peer reviews offer more detailed analysis of school performance, but it's very clear that preparation for an Ofsted inspection should never be the main driver of how any school operates: a good school is one that sets its own goals and delivers against its own ambitions, and it is Ofsted's job to report on the quality of a schools' provision for its pupils against an agreed inspection framework. As Lee Owston HMI and Ofsted Deputy Director, has noted:

Do what is right for your pupils, not what you think is right for Ofsted (Owston,2022).

However, educational assessment clearly features as one element of Ofsted's School Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2022), but assessment is not and should not be a goal in itself; rather it should be the means by which we measure the effectiveness of the school curriculum, the educational development of pupils, their attainment and learning needs. Indeed, a sound knowledge of educational assessment theory and practice is a pre-requisite for understanding performance standards, learning progression and curriculum design.

The School Inspection Framework (ibid) in essence sets out in broad terms the expectations of a well-run school, but it is not, and in reality, should not be prescriptive. As one would expect, assessment does feature in the Inspection Framework. For example, under the *Quality of education* the Framework states:

...teachers and leaders use assessment well, for example to help learners embed and use knowledge fluently or to check understanding and inform teaching. Leaders understand the limitations of assessment and do not use it in a way that creates unnecessary burdens for staff or learners; and

teachers...check learners' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct feedback. In doing so, they respond and adapt their teaching as necessary, without unnecessarily elaborate or differentiated approaches (Ofsted, 2022. Accessed online).

The Framework also makes clear the expectation that school leaders and managers:

...focus on improving staff's subject, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and the appropriate use of assessment (Ofsted,2022).

Ofsted has made clear on numerous occasions that performance and tracking data (so much of it lacking validity and only serving to increase unnecessary teacher workload) is not required for inspections and that it is up to schools determine and justify their practices. As such, schools will need in-house expertise in determining and defending their approach to, and use of educational assessment. And where Ofsted inspectors detect gaps in provision, it will result in required actions as a recent next step example from Ofsted demonstrates:

Assessment is not used well to identify and address any misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that gaps in learning for some pupils who are working below the level of their peers are not identified or closed as quickly as they could be. Leaders should ensure that there is a clear approach to assessment in place to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge or any misconceptions and to address these quickly (Owston, 2022).

Having access to valid, reliable and meaningful information produced by accredited Lead Assessors will also help headteachers and others to report the attainment and progress of pupils to parents, school governors and other interested parties in a manner that will instil confidence in the work of the school. It will also provide a coherent approach to sharing information within a school as pupils transfer from one class to another - or one school to another – in a way that will address the concern raised by the NAHT Commission on Assessment of the “...worrying lack of trust in individual teacher-based assessment, which emanates from within the profession itself” (NAHT, 2014, p. 15).

4. To develop a highly skilled workforce with expertise in educational assessment

We have to face it: the teaching profession currently lacks expertise in educational assessment for understandable reasons. With a population of teachers many of whom were either taught or have taught a national curriculum first introduced in 1988 and administered statutory assessments or examinations stemming from external sources, it is hardly surprising that this element of pedagogy has been under-developed.

It is important to stress here that this in no way doubts the capability or potential of teachers, but rather reflects the powerful influence of externally determined assessment instruments, the lack of assessment theory and practice in initial teacher education and the paucity of high-quality on-going professional development in this field of expertise. This is highlighted by the unequivocal finding of The Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training (Carter, 2015) that:

Of all areas of ITT content, we believe the most significant improvements are needed for training in assessment. Findings from the NAHT Commission (2014b) as well as Ofsted have also found weaknesses in assessment training. We believe that there are significant gaps in both the capacity of schools and ITT providers in the theoretical and technical aspects of assessment (p.9).

My own research at the University of Leeds (Walker, 2020) showed that 83% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with Carter's finding (p.202) with a further 86% agreeing or strongly agreeing that there are significant gaps in the capacity of schools in the theoretical and technical aspects of assessment. In terms of key concepts used in educational assessment, 82.2% of respondents reported that bias was not included in their ITT, with 75.8% for validity and 73.2% for reliability (p.214). An understanding of these concepts in the field of educational assessment is essential, yet this research suggests they are missing from the repertoire of teachers' knowledge. This alone should make professional development in educational assessment a priority for school leaders.

None of this comes as a real surprise as concerns over teacher-based assessments have been raised over time (see for example QCA, 2005; Colwill, 2007) and in a report commissioned by Ofqual, Johnson (2011) noted:

There are issues surrounding teacher assessment that have to do with potential bias, application of different, sometimes personal, assessment criteria, and differences in the available evidence base when implemented curricula and standards of judgement differ from class to class and school to school (p.5).

And in a summary of the report Ofqual (2013) quote evidence of:

...a low level of expertise, knowledge and motivation among teachers when it comes to internal standardisation (accessed online).

But this can and should be fixed: assessment is integral to the teaching and learning process. Teachers are highly capable individuals and members of a profession. Indeed, the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) was in part established to develop expertise in educational assessment following widely reported issues with the awarding of GCE A levels in 2002. Following the failures of 2002, the resultant Working Group on 14-19 Reform led by former HMCI Sir Mike Tomlinson concluded in its Final Report (2004) that:

An Institute of Assessors would support the professional development of teachers and ensure all of those operating the system develop expertise in assessment practice: and

Internal quality assurance systems would include internal moderation and verification procedures. Chartered Assessors in each school, college and training provider would be integral to developing their institution's assessment strategies and managing this process.

The Institute will support the professional development and standing of teachers, markers, examiners, moderators, assessors and verifiers by providing membership services, training and qualifications.

It will have an important role in supporting public confidence and recognition of the role of assessors (p.60).

In more recent times, Tim Sherriff (2022) has made his views on the benefits to schools of having a Chartered Educational Assessor and Lead Assessor very clear:

In order to achieve the level of expertise we expect of our teachers, we have invested in high quality CPD provided by the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA). The Deputy Headteacher is an accredited CIEA Chartered Educational Assessor who oversees assessment throughout the school, supported by an assessment coordinator who has recently completed the Lead Assessor Support Programme. Both members of the team support staff through a variety of activities.

As headteacher I have been delighted with the impact of our investment in such high-quality CPD. Leaders and teachers at all levels understand the purpose and use of assessment and this is evidenced through the quality of discourse amongst staff. It is only when teachers have a deep understanding of assessment that effective practice can be developed. We are highly conscious of reducing teacher workload and through ongoing dialogue and discussion we increasingly focus on things that matter and make a difference to pupil progress (accessed online).

This view is echoed by the recommendation of Sir Tim Brighouse and Mick Waters (2022) that:

Internal assessment in all schools should be led by a qualified Chartered Assessor licensed through the CIEA. The Chartered Assessor will be skilled in diagnostic, formative, summative, evaluative and ipsative assessment and advise on the judicious and sparing use of norm-referenced assessment. In secondary schools, they will ensure that each department is competent in assessment (Brighouse and Waters, 2022, p.590).

5. To reduce teacher workload

The benefits to schools, individual teachers and importantly learners of having qualified teachers in the field of educational assessment are abundant. And to those concerned about teacher workload, I would point them again to the DfE workload reports and podcast noted elsewhere in this paper (DfE(a) & DfE(b), 2016; NAHT, 2022). A fuller grasp of educational assessment theory and practice will reduce workload by focussing on what works rather than what in some places appear to be an out-of-control obsession with data – most of which lacks any form of validity or impact on learning. We also must address and challenge some of what might be described as ‘habitual practice’ in our schools. The DfE reports (op cit) highlight some of the dubious practices that has developed over the years without any firm evidence of their veracity on the teaching and learning process, leading only to increased and unproductive teacher workload.

The report *Reducing teacher workload* (Herbert et al, 2018), shows just what can be done when schools work together, drawing on experts in the field and sharing alternative and evaluated approaches to assessment. A group of seventeen schools in Wigan contributed to the project that focused on marking. The final report presents a range of positive outcomes including:

1. *Gains in reduced workload were seen in every school, some of which were very substantial.*
2. *The new processes significantly reduced the burden on teachers, improved teacher morale, and improved teaching and learning (p. 5).*

Spending the time to develop expertise in educational assessment will help schools to establish manageable, meaningful and motivational approaches (DfE(a) & DfE(b), 2016) that will not only increase validity and reliability, but importantly reduce teacher workload by consigning dubious practice to the past.

6. To celebrate personal development and accredited professional qualifications

Teaching is a profession, and like all professions, I believe it is incumbent on members of a profession to continuously develop their knowledge and skills throughout their careers. Unfortunately, in the teaching profession, this aspect is too often neglected, ad hoc or put to one side as other more immediate demands are made on teachers. This shouldn't be the case and despite all the forces working against professional development, some leaders clearly manage to prioritise the development of their colleagues. In such cases, finding the right level and quality of support is crucial, not only in terms of school improvement, but also to support individual teachers who make the time and effort to continually reflect on and develop their practice.

Taking a CIEA accredited qualification or course demonstrates a commitment to high-quality personal development and receiving an award from a prestigious Chartered Institute adds another professional qualification to a teacher's curriculum vitae.

7. To build professional trust and integrity

As Amanda Hulme noted in her address to the NAHT Policy Conference, successive governments have questioned teachers' ability to conduct accurate assessments (NAHT, 2021). This observation is reflected in the QCA (2005), and Colwill (2007) reports noted earlier in this paper. Others have called for greater involvement of teachers in the assessment system as a means of increasing validity (see for example European Commission, 2018; Bew, 2011; Rimfeld et al., 2019; Mansell et al., 2009, cited in Baird et al., 2011: p. 44; Harlen, 2005; Wiliam, 2001).

But this has also led to concerns over trust in teachers' assessments (Ofqual, 2012 & 2013) and perhaps most worrying, from *within* the teaching profession. For example, the NAHT Commission on Assessment (2014) reported:

The Commission heard from the majority of those submitting evidence that there was a lack of trust in teacher assessment at the present time. There is a worrying lack of trust in individual teacher-based assessment, which emanates from within the profession itself (p.15).

In coming to this finding, the Commission noted that:

...junior schools often report that infant schools' assessments of their pupils are over-inflated, secondary schools argue that they need to test pupils on arrival because primary assessments, including national tests, cannot be relied upon. In part, this lack of trust is due to a lack of consistency and in part to the perverse incentives resulting from a high stakes accountability model (op cit, p.14)

Trust is at the heart of the reluctance to include teacher-based assessments in so called 'high-stakes' assessments – though I would argue along with Popham (2010) that any assessment that influences what happens to pupils should be recognised as 'high-stakes'. But trust must be earned, and this requires a clear demonstration of ability and professional standing. Given the current level of ability and standing of the teaching profession in regard to educational assessment, this will clearly take time. But if teaching is a profession, surely it should be trusted by society and within the profession itself to make valid and reliable assessments as indeed it was in the past (Walker, 2020): if not, we are in a perilous state.

So, if we are to achieve the goal set by Motion 23 and the ambition set by Recommendation 9 of the NAHT Commission on Assessment (op. cit) to have trained assessment leads, the sooner this begins, the sooner we can be in a position to demonstrate the ability of the profession to make fair and valid assessments that can result in alternative and complementary approaches to our national system of educational assessment - and thereby improve the teaching and learning process.

Why the CIEA?

The CIEA is a charity, incorporated by Royal Charter, promoting excellence in all aspects of educational assessment. The object of the Institute is to advance education and training for the public benefit by promoting high standards of assessment. It is not driven by political dogma but rather the ambition to improve educational assessment wherever it takes place. And this covers a vast range of professions and workplace contexts including surgeons, engineers, and the armed forces. What unites CIEA members from this apparently diverse range of backgrounds is the desire to extend knowledge, improve practice and share experience of educational assessment so that we can be the best we can for the benefit of our learners.

The CIEA is the only organisation that can offer Chartered Status so by undertaking qualifications offered by the CIEA it provides a level of recognition and standing that supports professional and public confidence:

...teachers must have training and the opportunity to accumulate experience and enjoy a sufficient degree of public and professional trust to lend legitimacy to their decisions (Eckstein & Noah, 1993, p.235; in Lambert & Lines, 2001: p.77).

The Institute of Educational Assessors (IEA) was launched on 9 May 2006 to provide professional support and services for assessment in all its forms and received its Royal Charter, approved by the Privy Council in 2007 and effected on the 2nd of April

2008. At that point in time, the CIEA was promoted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families' Assessment for Learning Strategy (DCSF, 2008):

Every school needs someone who is not only a great classroom practitioner but also knows how to develop ways to support assessment in, for example, a year group, a subject, a department or a whole school. This person would be able to run in-school moderation, induct new staff into assessment routines or develop a robust assessment policy for the school. With the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors, we are working towards having a trained assessment specialist in each school (p.10).

The aspiration for an assessment specialist in every school was also a recommendation by the Expert Group on Assessment (DCSF, 2009):

All schools should have a lead assessor, with the longer term aspiration that by 2020, all schools should have access to an accredited Chartered Assessor (Recommendation 5(b): Strengthening the quality of teacher assessment, p.8).

With the further ambition that as:

...the Chartered Assessor models are further developed, trialled and implemented, DfEd (Sic) should monitor whether a sufficiently robust moderation infrastructure exists for teacher assessment to be used as part of the accountability system (Recommendation 7: Changing assessment at Key Stage 2, p.8).

The Independent Review of Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability (Bew Review, 2011) provided further support for the idea of greater emphasis on teacher assessment within the statutory framework highlighting that teacher assessment and external testing have valuable roles to play in our education system noting that:

We do not believe that statutory assessment needs to rely only on one or other of these forms (p.10).

Since 2014, the NAHT has promoted a higher profile for educational assessment in the repertoire of teachers' skills calling for every school to identify the learning and development needs for assessment along with the allocation of specific time and resources for professional development so that:

All those responsible for children's learning should undertake rigorous training in formative, diagnostic and summative assessment, which covers how assessment can be used to support teaching and learning for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The government should provide support and resources for accredited training for school assessment leads and schools should make assessment training a priority (NAHT, 2014. Recommendation 16, p.7).

As noted in Amanda Hulme's address to the Policy Conference:

As a profession we are all aware of the importance of the need for high quality, rigorous and accurate assessment. We are expected to be the experts in this field and often we are, but the opportunities for training to increase confidence, knowledge and skills are limited (NAHT, 2021. Accessed online).

Now, sometime after the initial calls for greater expertise in educational assessment in our schools cited above, the NAHT and the CIEA are working together to bring this vision to reality. Together we have an opportunity to raise expertise and confidence and to recognise the professional status of our teachers through a Chartered and respected leading body in the field of educational assessment.

For further information on the Lead Assessor Support Programme and the Lead Assessor Award, go to the CIEA website: <https://www.herts.ac.uk/ciea/lead-assessor-support-programme>

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Endnoteⁱ

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Years of unnecessary high-stakes external tests and exams have narrowed the curriculum delivery and opportunities for children and young people. Alongside this there have been limited professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills in assessment and collaborate with others.

Conference calls on national executive to lobby government to provide support and resources for the development of independently-accredited training for lead assessors in every school.

Conference further calls on the national executive to work with the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors to encourage every school to have a lead assessor and ensure members and the appropriate staff in their school can access the training provided by CIEA.

Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnjHvmhCYEM>