Report on the ILTA Workshop on Classroom Language Assessment

27th to 29th September, 2011

Prof Pauline Rea-Dickins & Dr. Lilian Vikiru

Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development
East Africa
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The three days workshop on language testing hosted by AKU-IED, EA was held on 27th to 29th September, 2011. The workshop, sponsored by ILTA, was meant to initiate professional dialogue and consequently training for selected key personnel involved in the education of language teachers.

1.2 The workshop was a timely offering in the Tanzanian context where language testing and assessment is an area of significant concern at all levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary levels). The concern not only relates to large-scale summative assessment but also to school-based (or institutional) formative assessment. Some of the reasons for this concern are:

- The annual analyses of national examinations that show poor performance by students in both Kiswahili and English
- Teachers are poorly equipped for general assessment literacy- it is not well covered in initial teacher training programmes and there are very few opportunities for professional development thereafter (Kalole, 2006)
- Teachers are not well versed and equipped with skills for effective assessment of language skills evidenced in poor classroom assessment by teachers, limited opportunities for formative assessment of learners and poor skills in writing assessment items (Rea-Dickins et al 2007-2010, ESRC/DfID Major Research Grant: RES-167-25-0263; see www.bristol.ac.uk/spine).

1.3 While these areas of concern in language testing and assessment are well identified, there is little research on assessment in general and assessment of language in particular in Tanzania. Similarly, while the need for training is acknowledged, there are few opportunities for capacity development of those involved in assessment of language at various levels. This workshop, albeit on a very minimal scale, sought to provide an opportunity for those in selected key institutions to engage with and debate issues in language assessment and testing with a view to raising awareness that might ultimately influence the practice of teachers and others involved in language assessment.

1.4 This report details the objectives, implementation and outcomes of the ILTA sponsored workshop on Classroom Language Assessment.
2.0 Workshop Participants

2.1 The main objective of the workshop was to contribute to the development of language assessment capacity and literacy among key personnel responsible for the education of both English and Kiswahili teachers,

2.2 Workshop participants represented a range of relevant institutions within Tanzania, e.g. the National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA), Tanzania Institute for Education (TIE), selected Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), Universities, Teacher Resource Centres (TRCs) and Schools. These participants, it was assumed, are in a position to share their learning and experiences with a wider audience.

2.3 A total of 27 participants from different parts of Tanzania mainland and the islands attended the workshop (Appendix 1). This was 90% of projected attendance - some of the invited personnel from the Ministry of Education could not attend due to other official duties.

3. Workshop Facilitators

3.1 The facilitators were Prof. P. Rea-Dickins, Dr. L. Vikiru and L. Njoroge from the Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, East Africa.

4. The Programme

4.1 The topics explored during the workshop were:
- What is classroom based language assessment?
- Assessing language knowledge and skills
- Planning for classroom based language assessment
- Designing, critiquing and developing assessment tasks
- Assessing reading
- Guidelines for good practice in classroom language assessment.
- Framing policies for coursework assessment.

These were spread over the three day period (Appendix 2).

4.2 Participants were provided with a pack of essential readings and samples of assessment tools and tasks. These were used as input for the discussions and data driven activities during the sessions.
4.3 Participants planned for and developed assessment tasks in groups. They also developed and framed exemplar policies and guidelines for good practice in coursework assessment. They peer assessed their group work, received some feedback from facilitators and also were given an opportunity to reflect on what had been covered.

4.0 Workshop Evaluation

5.1 Participants completed a Workshop Evaluation Form. Overall, the workshop was well received with participants appreciating the knowledge gained.

5.2 Participants requested further workshops to cover other areas in language assessment, and to include more participants (beyond Tanzania). Suggested areas for future workshops were:

- Learner’s readiness for assessment

1 One facilitator from Zanzibar was unable to participate for personal reasons.
• Techniques for effective assessment in particular in poorly resourced contexts
• Effective assessment for Higher Education institutions.

This evaluation was corroborated by the facilitators’ observations from the quality of the discussions, participation in activities, questions and inquiries made by participants. It was clear that the participants were thirsty for knowledge and skills development in the area of assessment and would benefit from further workshops in specific domains of language assessment (see Evaluation Summary, Appendix 3).

6. Summary

6.1 The workshop made start in addressing an area of significant concern within Tanzania that requires more research and opportunities for capacity development for practitioners (personal communication with Dr. Ndalichako, CEO, NECTA).

6.2 Language testing and assessment is an integral part of instruction and has an overarching effect on general performance of both learners and teachers. Through the various workshop activities, the participants were able to frame policies and guidelines for good practice, model ‘best practice’ and critique their own practice.

6.3 The inclusion of key personnel in the workshop was strategic in the hope to influence the assessment practices of others whom the participants are in a position to reach. We anticipate that the opportunity accorded to us by ILTA is the beginning of a broader and deeper interaction among those involved in language teaching and assessment in Tanzania and hopefully, in the region. To take this initiative forward, the IED Annual Research Institute is being held in November 2011 and a series of Master Classes on Current Issues in Assessment will be run to complement the ILTA Workshop focused on Classroom Language Assessment (funded by AKU). The same participants will also be invited.

6.4 Since the workshop, Rea-Dickins and Ndalichako have discussed ways forward for the future and discussions are in process to take forward the idea of an Assessment Research Network.

6.5 The financial statement for the ILTA Workshop is provided as Appendix 4.

Prof Pauline Rea-Dickins & Dr. Lilian Vikiru

Dar es Salaam, February, 2012
## Appendix 1: List of Participants

**THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**WORKSHOP ON EXPLORING CLASSROOM BASED LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AFFILIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Stomin Hudson Msaka</td>
<td>Tanzania Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 SalimKassimHamad</td>
<td>Benjamin Mkapa TTC, Pemba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 LailaHemed Ali</td>
<td>Benjamin Mkapa TTC, Pemba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 John Milanzi</td>
<td>Mtwara Girls’ Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Ally Zemba</td>
<td>Mtwara Girls’ Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 WinfridaMtwagaba</td>
<td>Ilonga TTC, Kilosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Rose Temu</td>
<td>Ilonga TTC, Kilosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Edith Mdoe</td>
<td>Vikindu TTC, Dar es Salaam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Theogenes Alex</td>
<td>Vikindu TTC, Dar es Salaam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Godfrey Asajile</td>
<td>Mhonda TTC, Turiani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 CuthbertaMwakatage</td>
<td>Mhonda TTC, Turiani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Moses Lutta</td>
<td>Shangani Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 ShakilaMkwazu</td>
<td>Shangani Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Kelvin Mathayo</td>
<td>University of Dar es Salaam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Hassan Issa Ali</td>
<td>University College of Education, Zanzibar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 MbaroukSalim</td>
<td>University College of Education, Zanzibar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Suweid A. Suweid</td>
<td>State University of Zanzibar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Maulid Haji</td>
<td>State University of Zanzibar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 HarounMaalim</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Innocent Buberwa</td>
<td>Dar es Salaam University College of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Joyce Kipanda</td>
<td>Dar es Salaam University College of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Monica Chongwani</td>
<td>National Examinations Council of Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Esther Thomas</td>
<td>National Examinations Council of Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Said Jaffa</td>
<td>Muslim University Morogoro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Jaffer S. Athumani</td>
<td>Muslim University Morogoro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Fat-HiyaBrek</td>
<td>Teachers’ Resource Centre, Zanzibar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Omar Said</td>
<td>State University of Zanzibar</td>
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## Appendix 2: Workshop Programme

### Programme
Aga Khan University
Institute for Educational Development
Exploring Language Classroom Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Tuesday, 27 September</th>
<th>SESSIONS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0830 - 0930</td>
<td>Registration, Opening &amp; Introductions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0930 - 1030</td>
<td>Introducing Classroom-based Assessment (PRD)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100 - 1300</td>
<td>Introducing Language Assessment (Cont.) (PRD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400 - 1600</td>
<td>Assessing Language Knowledge and Skills (LV)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600 - 1630</td>
<td>Reflections on Day 1 Assignment for Day 1 (LV)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Wednesday, 28 September</th>
<th>SESSIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0830 - 0930</td>
<td>Review of Day 1 Assignment (LV)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0930 - 1045</td>
<td>Classroom-based Assessment: Key Features (PRD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1115 - 1300</td>
<td>Planning for Language Assessment (LV)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400 – 1530</td>
<td>Coursework Assessment: Policy and Practice (PRD/LV)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1530 - 1630</td>
<td>Reflections on Day 2 Assignment for Day 2 (LV)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Thursday, 29 September</th>
<th>SESSIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0830 - 0945</td>
<td>Review of Day 2 Assignment: Assessing Reading (LV/LN)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0945 - 1045</td>
<td>Critiquing Reading Assessments (LV/LN)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1115 - 1300</td>
<td>Guidelines for Good Practice in Classroom Language Assessment (LV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1300 - 1315</td>
<td>Workshop Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1315 – 1345</td>
<td>CLOSING CEREMONY LUNCH &amp; DEPARTURE</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Workshop Facilitators:
- **Professor Pauline Rea-Dickins (PRD)**
- **Dr. Lilian Vikiru (LV)**
- **Lawrence Njoroge (LN)**

### Venue:
- All sessions in Mandela Hall
- Floor 2, IED

*An International Language Testing Association Sponsored Workshop*
### Appendix 3: Summary of Workshop Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of evaluation</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workshop structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well organized</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impressive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoyable</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good time management</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly competent facilitators</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive facilitation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate materials</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key points of learning</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for assessment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better assessment for language learning</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful assessment during instruction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of assessment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of assessment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom based assessment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance in assessing language skills</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing an assessment policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizing a workshop</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Workshop strengths</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provision of facilities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of materials</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work and discussions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation(interactive)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducive environment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good coordination</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good time management</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggestions for improvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More handouts for participants for use later</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More workshops for different levels</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw participants from across EA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives for participants (allowances)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time to discuss other areas in assessment g. use of feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include practical sessions in a school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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### Areas in language assessment for future workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area in Language Assessment</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact of assessment on learners’ reactions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test administration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing writing skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing assessment reports</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of language among young learners (early years)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment for teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing assessment items</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of national summative assessment in language</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom based assessment at the university level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining reliability and validity of tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical work on marking tests (e.g. samples of national examinations)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving assessment at primary school level and teacher education colleges in areas with poor resources</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues in language assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

### Other comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heads of institutions should be informed so as to support participants by providing per diems and other allowances</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Appendix 4: Financial Report

#### The Aga Khan University - Tanzania Institute of Higher Education
Finance Report on Language Testing and Assessment 2011

#### Training Costs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amount in US$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Honorarium</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600*</td>
<td>#VALUE!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sub Total faculty time</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>#VALUE!</td>
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</table>

#### Direct training:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Residential Cost</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>(237)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Course Participant Travel</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Stationery</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bank Charges</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Catering and food</td>
<td>1,217</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td>(98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sub Total direct training</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| 9     | Total Cost of Workshop    | 3,000  | 2,400   | #VALUE! |

*This amount was used to pay for travel costs for participants from Tanzania mainland who had traveled over 300km to the venue. Faculty did not receive honorarium.*