



# international work at the NFER





## A leader in international research

The National Foundation for Educational Research has been a world leader in educational research for more than 60 years. During this time it has developed an unrivalled reputation in the field of international surveys. As nations around the world acknowledge the importance of educational excellence as a driver for economic prosperity, so NFER has become a key player in analysing and monitoring academic progress among children of all ages, both in the UK and further afield. Also branching into the area of children's services, the NFER's work is backed and funded by government departments, as well as other leading organisations and stakeholders in education.

The range of expertise and experience of NFER's teams allows it to offer independent, innovative and rigorous services to clients, which are specifically tailored to their requirements, and delivered by internationally renowned researchers.

## Our work in the world arena – large and small scale

The NFER prides itself on its involvement in some of the most important and ground-breaking international comparative studies into educational standards and trends. Our findings have helped to inform policy-makers and professionals, and shaped ongoing developments and reforms in national education policies.

- NFER is the national centre for the United Kingdom for the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), an internationally standardised assessment, taken by 15-year-olds in participating countries.
- The Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is run by NFER in England and Scotland. The results of trends analysis of students' achievements in years 5 and 9 enables international comparisons of the quality, quantity and content of teaching.

## International credentials

*The Foundation is a corporate member of the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE), a network of research agencies that play a national role in curriculum development and educational research.*

*It is also a corporate member, and currently holds the Presidency, of the Association for Educational Assessment (AEA) Europe, which acts as a platform for discussion of development in educational assessment around the continent, fostering cooperation and facilitating liaison between people who work in the field of assessment.*

- The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), run by NFER in England and Scotland, measures trends in children's reading and gathers information about reading and literacy policies and teaching methods every five years in year 5. It enables international comparisons in pupil attainment and the literacy strategies used by teachers.
- NFER is a member of the international co-ordinating centre for the new IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), which is investigating how well 14 year olds are prepared for their roles as citizens in over 40 countries. The ICCS study is also run in England by NFER.

Smaller-scale projects include our work with lesser-used languages. Working for the European Commission, our research team developed stories for publication in minority languages in Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Italy as part of a project to investigate support for the teaching of literacy skills in the minority languages of bilingual children.

## Our subject specialisms

NFER researchers are expert in key subject areas, including:

- assessment systems and test development
- factors that can lead to school improvement
- use of information and communications technology
- effective multi-agency working
- efficient integrated services
- problems associated with exclusion and disaffection
- the effects of social disadvantage.

## Leaders in educational research

*NFER's reputation as a leader in educational research is due in no small part to its teams of highly skilled researchers in key subject areas.*

*NFER's researchers regularly collaborate with teachers, academics, educationalists and governments all over the world.*

## Some of our experts



**Marian Sainsbury** is NFER's Head of Literacy Assessment Research, and is leading NFER's research into formative uses of e-assessment. She is also international reading coordinator for the Progress in

International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and director of projects developing assessments of communication skills for Wales and optional national tests in England.



**Graham Ruddock** is Head of International Assessment Research. He directs the development of mathematics and science tests and is the mathematics coordinator for the 2007 Trends in International

Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). He has been involved with TIMSS since the late 1990s

and was part of the three-person team that developed the mathematics assessments for the 2003 survey. He was National Research Coordinator for England for both the 1999 and 2003 surveys and also undertook this role for Scotland in 2003. He has also been involved with questionnaire development for TIMSS.



**Jenny Bradshaw** is the National Project Manager for the Programme in International Student Assessment (PISA) in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. She has considerable overseas

experience, including a four-year post with responsibility for all aspects of assessment in English in government schools in the Sultanate of Oman. She has also worked in Sweden, Hong Kong and Malaysia. At NFER she has led projects or undertaken consultancy work in Singapore, Hong Kong and Anguilla.



In October 2006 NFER's Chief Statistician, **Dougal Hutchison**, led a seminar on value-added in Santiago, Chile, designed to help the post-Pinochet government restructure the country's education system, branded as

one of the most unequal in the world. Dougal has also worked recently with academics in Norway, running an in-depth course in multilevel modelling.



**Peter Rudd**'s work covers school effectiveness and school improvement, raising achievement, underachievement, the use of value-added data, school leadership and ICT in schools.

His work on the primary literacy value-added project in Malta was part of the NFER's research and statistical consultancy to the University of Malta and the Maltese government.



**David Kerr** is Director of the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study, specialising in national, European and international citizenship education policy and practice. He has worked with European

and international agencies, including the Council of Europe, European Union, International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and British Council, and has directed a number of international and European seminars and events.

David and other NFER experts have been used by the British Council in visits to Chile, Colombia, Brazil and China among others, and are also involved with the Council of Europe Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE).

## International journal for educational research

*The Foundation has its own quarterly Educational Research journal, containing education papers from all over the world, which is edited and managed by NFER, and published by Taylor & Francis.*

*A recent special issue of the journal focussed on supporting vulnerable children and young people, featuring articles from Australia, Finland, Turkey, Zambia and the UK.*

## International Information Unit

NFER is home to the national Eurydice Unit for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Eurydice is the European information network for education, set up in 1980 by the European Commission to boost cooperation. It serves policy makers at European, national and local government level. The Unit offers an enquiry service for policy makers, an international current awareness bulletin and access to publications and databases.

The International Information Unit at NFER also manages the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) Internet Archive, which provides descriptions of government policy on education in 20 countries worldwide, focussing on the curriculum, assessment and initial teacher training.

The Unit conducts thematic probes and studies into specific subjects across the Archive's 20 countries, for example a probe into active citizenship. Member countries use the probe results to guide further detailed study, in order to provide information on which clear policy decisions can be based.



**Sharon O'Donnell** has been Head of the International Information Unit at NFER since 2005. Her background is in modern languages and her research interests are in educational policy, international research, curriculum management and assessment.



## A start to finish service

Working together, NFER's teams are skilled in a wide range of tried and tested research methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative.

We have the resources and capabilities to conduct and evaluate large-scale studies, as well as to work with smaller groups for specialised training and consultancy.

Our researchers are supported by in-house specialists in sophisticated statistical analysis and survey administration, and by quality control systems that ensure excellent service and results. Many researchers play key roles in devising, conducting and analysing major international studies, in partnership with colleagues overseas.

We communicate our findings in a variety of ways, ranging from bespoke web resources to reports and short summaries in print and electronic formats. What is really important to us is that the information from our research reaches the right people in a way they can use it to best advantage.

## Useful URLs

### NFER website

[www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/international/](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/international/)

### Eurydice at NFER

[www.nfer.ac.uk/eurydice](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/eurydice)

### INCA

[www.inca.org.uk](http://www.inca.org.uk)

### International surveys

[www.nfer.ac.uk/about-nfer/departments/assessment-and-measurement/international-assessment-activities.cfm](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/about-nfer/departments/assessment-and-measurement/international-assessment-activities.cfm)

### *Educational Research* journal

[www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/educational-research-journal.cfm](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/educational-research-journal.cfm)

## Contact details

For further information about our international work visit [www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/international](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/international) or contact [international@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:international@nfer.ac.uk).

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