IEA Secretariat
Herengracht 487
1017 BT Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Tel: +31 20 625 3625, Fax: +31 20 420 7136
E-mail: department@iea.nl

MINUTES

OF

THE 48th GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

OF

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

DOCUMENT No. IEA–HQ/GA/07

....

8-11 OCTOBER 2007

HONG KONG
SAR

....

HOSTED BY

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

LIST OF ATTENDEES

General Assembly Members

1. Australia	(i/a) John Ainley, ISSC
2. Austria	Jürgen Horschinegg
3. Belgium (Flemish)	i/a Christiane Dehairs, SC, Honorary M
4. Botswana	Serara Moahi
5. Canada	Pierre Brochu
6. Chinese Taipei	Chen-Yung Lin
7. Cyprus	Constantinos Papanastasiou
8. Czech Republic	Pavla Zieleniecova
9. Denmark	Lars-Henrik Schmidt
10. England	Lorna Bertrand
11. Estonia	Anu Toots
12. Finland	Jouni Välijärvi
13. France	Claude Sauvageot
14. Georgia	Maia Miminoshvili
15. Germany	Eckhard Klieme
16. Hong Kong, SAR	Frederick Leung
17. Hungary	Sándor Brassói
18. Iceland	Júliús Björnsson
19. Indonesia	Burhanuddin Tola
20. Italy	Piero Cipollone
21. Japan	Ryo Watanabe
22. Kazakhstan	Bazar Damitov
23. Korea	(i/a) Kun-Nim Lee
24. Latvia	Andris Kangro
25. Lithuania	Rita Dukynaite
26. Luxembourg	Michael Lanners
27. Malaysia	Amir bin Salleh
28. The Netherlands	Paul van Oijen
29. New Zealand	i/a Megan Chamberlain
30. Norway	Anne-Berit Kavli, SC
31. Philippines	Ester Ogena
32. Russian Federation	Galina Kovalyeva
33. Qatar	Adel Al-Sayed
34. Scotland	i/a Jackie Horne
35. Slovak Republic	Július Hauser
36. Slovenia	Janez Justin
37. South Africa	Anil Kanjee
38. Spain	Enrique Roca
39. Sweden	Kerstin Mattsson
40. Thailand	i/a Niramon Kittvibul
41. Turkey	Ibrahim Demirer
42. United States	Tom Loveless, SC

IEA Officers

43. Jur Hartenberg, Secretariat
44. Seamus Hegarty, Chair
45. Barbara Malak-Minkiewicz, Secretariat
46. Suzanne Morony, Secretariat
47. Heiko Sibberns, DPC, TEG (*ex officio*)
48. Hans Wagemaker, Executive Director, TEG Chair

Technical Executive Group

49. Larry Hedges, University of Chicago, United States
50. Marc Joncas, Statistics Canada
51. Christian Monseur, Liège University, Belgium

Publication and Editorial Committee

52. Robert Garden, Honorary Member
53. David Robitaille, Chair, Honorary Member

Study International Coordinators/ISC Chairs

54. Michael Martin, PIRLS, TIMSS, TIMSS Advanced TEG (*ex officio*)
55. Ina Mullis, PIRLS, TIMSS, TIMSS Advanced, TEG (*ex officio*)
56. Hans Pelgrum, SITES 2006
57. Tjeerd Plomp, SITES 2006, Honorary Member
58. Glenn Rowley, TEDS-M
59. Jack Schwille, TEDS
60. Teresa Tatto, TEDS

Observers

61. Alhaja Bello (WAEC)
62. Marguerite Clarke (World Bank)
63. Žaneta Džumhur,(Standards and Assessment Agency in Education, Bosnia)
64. Cesar Guadalupe-Mendizabal (UNESCO Institute for Statistics)
65. Karine Harutyunyan (Ministry of Education and Science, Armenia)
66. Anders Hingel (European Commission)
67. Paulína Koršňáková (National Institute for Education, Slovak Republic)
68. Iamze Kutaladze (NAEC, Georgia)
69. Nancy Law (University of Hong Kong)
70. Rainer Lehmann (Humboldt University, Germany)
71. Fou-Lai Lin (Taiwan Normal University), SC
72. Marlaine Lockheed (Evaluator)
73. Valena Plisko (NCES, United States)
74. Pattanida Puntumasen (Office of the Educational Council, Thailand)
75. Jeffrey Puryear (PREAL)
76. Rosario Sanchez, (Institute of Evaluation, Spain)
77. Jean-Noel Senne (PASEC/CONFEMEN)
78. Masako Shinohara (NFER, Japan)
79. M.A. Siskandar (Ministry of Education, Indonesia)
80. Shek Kam Tse (University of Hong Kong)
81. Chris Whetton (NFER, England and Wales)
82. Benny Yung (University of Hong Kong)
83. Hamidah Yusof (Ministry of Education, Malaysia)
84. Pierre Varly (PASEC/CONFEMEN)
85. Daniel Vitry (Ministry of Education, France)

APOLOGIES (GA-48/I/03)

GA Representatives:

86. Michal Beller, Israel
87. Christiane Blondin, Belgium French
88. Maddy Bollen, Belgium Flemish
89. Amrung Chantavanich, Thailand
90. Mohammad Eslamieh, Iran

91. Georgia Kontogiannopoulou-Polydorides, Greece
92. Pedro Montt, Chile
93. Mansyur Ramly, Indonesia
94. Lynne Whitney, New Zealand

International Coordinators / Members of the Committees:

95. Jan-Eric Gustafsson, TEG
96. Lawrence Ingwarson, TEDS-M
97. Wolfram Schulz, ICCS

Observers:

98. Adel Al-Ali, UNDP
99. Regina Bendokat, World Bank
100. Mark Bray, IIEP UNESCO
101. Guntras Catlakas, EI
102. James Dietz, NSF United States
103. Viola Espinola, IEDB
104. Kenneth Ross, IIEP UNESCO
105. Sue Rossitier, NFER England and Wales
106. Patricia Wasiau-Schlüter, Eurydice European Unit

Monday, October 8
Session I 09:00 – 9:45

Welcoming Addresses
Dr Seamus Hegarty, IEA Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed delegates and guests representing more than 40 countries. He handed the floor to Mr Raymond Wong, Permanent Secretary of Education, Hong Kong, SAR.

Mr Wong welcomed the IEA delegates and reflected on twenty years of educational reform around the world. He noted that reform was a global trend, and that the dominant paradigm had shifted to include a focus on self-directed Life Long Learning. He briefly reviewed the extensive and transformative reforms in education within Hong Kong SAR, and stated that Hong Kong was now at a juncture and was evaluating the effects of the reforms so far. He articulated his desire for Hong Kong to become a regional educational hub, and reinforced the imperative to collect data on achievements in order to evaluate educational systems. He stressed the importance of international studies on education, led by IEA, and welcomed delegates to Hong Kong.

Dr Hegarty thanked Mr Wong, and handed the floor to Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, Vice-Chancellor of The University of Hong Kong.

Professor Tsui thanked the Permanent Secretary for Education for his comments. He welcomed delegates and expressed his hope that the meeting would facilitate the ongoing development of long-term partnerships around the world, arguing that collaboration across disciplines, institutions, and nations, is the key to new knowledge and research excellence. He thanked the IEA and The University of Hong Kong.

Opening Statements
In his opening statement, Dr Seamus Hegarty characterized the past year as a very productive one in which projects have developed smoothly, and he paid tribute to the skilled and dedicated efforts by all partners. The established projects (PIRLS 2006, TIMSS 2007, SITES 2006) are in good shape, and the new studies (ICCS 2009, TEDS-M, and TIMSS Advanced 2008) are progressing well. The secondary analysis agenda is developing noticeably and there is clear evidence that policy makers and practitioners are taking the work of IEA more and more seriously as the demand for quality assessment and analysis continues to grow. According to Dr Hegarty, IEA is well-placed to meet this growing international demand.

Dr Wagemaker, the IEA Executive Director, welcomed delegates and observers to the General Assembly, and thanked Permanent Secretary for Education Wong, Vice-Chancellor, Tsui, and The University of Hong Kong, with particular reference to organizer Dr Frederick Leung. He thanked all funding partners, and introduced several distinguished observers: Ms Valena Plisko (NCES, USA), Dr Marguerite Clark (World Bank), Dr Anders Hingel (European Commission), and Dr Marlaine Lockheed (World Bank evaluator).

Dr Wagemaker cited the quantity of printed materials released at this meeting (*PIRLS 2006 Encyclopedia* – Boston College; *Progress in Reading Literacy: The Impact of PIRLS 2001 in 13 Countries* – K Schwippert (ed.), Waxmann; *IRC 2006 Conference Proceedings* Volumes 1 and 2 - IEA; *Lessons Learned: What international assessments tell us about math achievement* – T. Loveless (Ed), Brookings), as evidence that there is much to celebrate this year. He thanked all involved for their cooperation and production of materials, and noted a high level of activity and collaborative work at the Data Processing and Research Center (DPC) and the IEA Secretariat. He identified secondary analysis and training as areas where IEA can develop capacity, and referred to discussion paper GA-48/I/10 as a reminder of where IEA has come from, what changes have occurred, and the challenges arising from the growth in participation in IEA studies in terms of both numbers and diversity.

The Executive Director thanked all for their cooperation over the past year, and noted that none of this work would be possible without the support of IEA funding partners: NSF and NCES of the United States, the governments of Japan, the Netherlands and Norway, as well as international organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, and the Ford Foundation. Financially the IEA organization is secure; however Dr Wagemaker noted there are some issues to address at this meeting.

Approval/Amendment of Minutes of 47th GA in Amiens, France (GA-48/I/02)
No changes were made to the minutes from Amiens.

That the Minutes be approved:

> *Moved:* Frederick Leung, Hong Kong SAR
> *Seconded:* Jürgen Horschinegg, Austria
> *Carried:* unanimously.

Approval/Amendment of the Agenda (GA-48/I/01)
A revised Agenda was distributed reflecting the discussions at the recent meetings of the Technical Executive Group and the Standing Committee. These changes will be reflected in the Minutes of the meeting.

That the Agenda be approved:

> *Moved:* Constantinos Papanastasiou, Cyprus
> *Seconded:* Christiane Brusselmans-Dehairs, Belgium (Flemish)
> *Carried:* unanimously.

Apologies (GA-48/I/03)
The Chair referred to the list of invitees who sent apologies (*see page 3-4 of the Minutes*).

<u>Session II</u> 10:30 – 12:00

Approval of New Standing Committee Members (GA-48/I/04)
Three members of the Standing Committee concluded their terms and the Standing Committee nominated three replacements (GA-48/I/04). The nominations for replacements are: Jürgen Horschinegg (Austria), Frederick Leung (Hong Kong SAR) and Pavla Zieleniecova (Czech Republic).

That Mr Jürgen Horschinegg, GA Representative for Austria, be approved as a member of the Standing Committee (GA-48/I/04.1):

> *Moved:* Kerstin Mattsson (Sweden)
> *Seconded:* Lorna Bertrand (England)
> *Carried:* unanimously.

That Dr Frederick Leung, GA Representative for Hong Kong SAR, be approved as a member of the Standing Committee (GA-48/I/04.2):

Moved: Jouni Välijärvi (Finland)
Seconded: Júliús Björnsson (Iceland)
Carried: unanimously.

That Ms Pavla Zieleniecova, GA Representative for Czech Republic, be approved as a member of the Standing Committee (GA-48/I/04.3):

Moved: Anne-Berit Kavli (Norway)
Seconded: Jürgen Horschinegg (Austria)
Carried: unanimously.

Dr Hegarty welcomed new members to the Standing Committee and thanked those who stood down for their service: Ms Anica Aleksova (Macedonia), who recently left her position in the Ministry; Ms Christiane Brusselmans-Dehairs (Belgium Flemish), Honorary Member of IEA; and Dr Fou Lai Lin (Chinese Taipei), a steadfast supporter of IEA over many years.

Approval of New Members (GA-48/I/05)
The Standing Committee recommended to the General Assembly the candidacy of the *Ministry of Education and Science*, Republic of Armenia, and the *Standards and Assessment Agency*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as new members of IEA.

The presentation for Armenia was made by Karine Baghdasaryan, the intended General Assembly representative of Armenia to IEA. The candidate from Bosnia and Herzegovina was presented by Zaneta Dzumhur, who would represent the Agency to the IEA General Assembly.

That the National Assessment and Examinations Centre, Republic of Armenia be admitted to membership of IEA (GA-48/I/05.1):

Moved: Galina Kovalyeva (Russian Federation)
Seconded: Pavla Zieleniecova (Czech Republic)
Carried: unanimously

That the *Standards and Assessment Agency*, Bosnia and Herzegovina be admitted to membership of IEA (GA-48/I/05.2):

Moved: Jürgen Horschinegg (Austria)
Seconded: Constantinos Papanastasiou, (Cyprus)
Carried: unanimously

Dr Hegarty congratulated the new members and said it was a measure of the vitality of the organization that new systems wanted to join. Dr Wagemaker noted that this brought the membership of IEA to 64.

IEA Awards (GA-48/I/06)
Dr Hegarty reminded the Assembly of the two awards: the Bruce H. Choppin Award which is a longstanding award made for the most outstanding Masters or Doctoral dissertation using IEA data; and the more recently established Richard M. Wolf award for outstanding published research using IEA data.

In 2007, three applications were received for the Bruce Choppin award. The Publications and Editorial committee determined the award should go to Xie Yiyu from the University of California, Berkley (United States) for her dissertation:

> *Three studies of person by item interactions in international assessments of educational achievement*. (GA-48/I/06.b)

The Richard Wolf award was awarded for the first time in 2007 to Tse Shek-Kam, Lam Joseph Wai-Ip, Loh Elisabeth Ka-Yee, and Lam Raymond Yu-Hong, from the Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong for their paper:

> *The influence of the language the Hong Kong primary school students habitually speak at home on their Chinese reading ability in school.* Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development. (GA-48/I/06.c).

Announcements (GA-48/I/07)

The report of the IEA Pre-Primary Project (GA-48/E) was included in the briefing book to provide reference to interested persons about this completed project. This is one of the oldest and long-standing (duration) projects of IEA. Dr Wagemaker noted that this was always one of the easiest projects for IEA, because the project directors were always very transparent with reporting. The document outlines some of the major findings.

Honorary Membership for Constantinos Papanastasiou (GA-48/III/24)

Dr Hegarty asked Constantinos Papanastasiou to leave the room and distributed document GA-48/III/24. Dr Hegarty explained that Professor Papanastasiou has been very active in IEA for many years. He was responsible for bringing Cyprus to IEA and has been General Assembly representative since 1992; he was a member of the Standing Committee from 1999 to 2001. He initiated the first IEA International Research Conference in 2004. Dr Hegarty noted that it confers honor on both IEA and Professor Papanastasiou for him to become an Honorary Member.

That Constantinos Papanastasiou, General Assembly Representative for Cyprus be made an honorary member of IEA:

> *Moved:* Jouni Välijärvi (Finland)
> *Seconded:* Galina Kovalyeva (Russian Federation)
> *Carried:* unanimously

Dr Papanastasiou thanked the Standing Committee for the proposal, and to the General Assembly for their support. He thanked Dr Barbara Malak-Minkiewicz of the IEA Secretariat for suggesting and motivating him to organize the first IEA International Research Conference. Dr Papanastasiou accepted the honorary membership.

IERI report (GA-48/I/08)

Dr Hans Wagemaker reminded delegates that the purpose of forming an association with ETS (IEA-ETS Research Institute, or IERI) was to stimulate secondary analysis, science, training and dissemination. The legal details took longer than anticipated to finalize, however as of January 2007 the Institute was fully established. There is now a publication focusing on the science of large scale assessment under preparation, and the intention is to develop a long-standing monograph series, for which IERI invites submission to publications. The monograph series is intended as a forum to publish work on IEA studies in order to promote best practice and improve the types of analyses conducted; researchers are encouraged to participate in this. Other activities include running training academies, the first of which will take place in November 2007 (and is fully subscribed). A second academy has been announced for 2008, and the plan is to have at least two per year, with different foci. The Institute has a long-term intention to host researchers for collaboration on secondary analysis either virtually or in person at the DPC in Hamburg. IEA can offer lots of support, and IERI wants to ensure that secondary analyses on the complex IEA datasets are done correctly.

The report was received.

DPC Report (GA-48/I/09)

Mr Heikko Sibberns, co-director of the IEA Data Processing and Research Center (DPC) explained that the Center's name change (to include "Research") reflects a shift in activity that is important for the Hamburg office and the entire IEA organization. Mr Sibberns expressed his apologies for an error of omission on the list of projects contributing to the DPC operating costs in document GA-48/I/09. The report did not mention TEDS-M, however TEDS-M has also contributed to the DPC operating costs.

The presentation consisted of an explanation of new software developed by the DPC, known as "Coding Expert". Coding or scoring is the process of assigning a code to constructed response items, and it requires good coding guides and training to be done correctly. Computer-aided coding has been implemented for some time at DPC for national projects. The new software was developed to deal with some problems with the old software (e.g. lack of support, change in activities of supplier, no room for improvement in existing system, some technical problems in usability, speed, stability); and the new software is IEA-owned. Looking forward, it is desirable to calculate agreement indices within the system, because currently it is necessary to export data and then analyze it in SAS or SPSS. The DPC is willing to explore conditions to make some modules (such as a training module) available for others. The "management" module, however, is currently tailored to the DPC environment and might not be simple to use in other environments.

The presentation generated considerable interest and discussion, covering issues such as data security (data is encrypted and very secure), quality control and coder reliability (the system has provision for measuring within- and between-coder reliability), possibilities for optical character recognition (the system works with OCR), and the possibility of adding annotations to the electronic files (e.g. for flagging unanticipated responses). The anticipated cost-reductions of transferring to an electronic coding system were particularly attractive features for a number of delegates; however, Mr Sibberns cautioned that the system requires ongoing investment in infrastructure and was therefore "not free". Some countries expressed that they had already invested in infrastructure that might support this software. Dr Wagemaker mentioned that the IEA would consider whether to make the software publicly available.

Dr Hegarty thanked Mr Sibberns for the presentation and the volume of work managed by the DPC.

Because the meeting was currently running ahead of schedule, Dr Hegarty proposed to move two items from Session IX (PEC and TEG reports) forward.

Publications and Editorial Committee Report GA-48/III/18

Dr David Robitaille summarized the work of the Publications and Editorial Committee (PEC) during a busy year, and thanked committee members Robert

Garden, Nancy Law, and Svein Lie for their hard work. Publications reviewed this year were:

1. IEA Awards brochure (electronic version on IEA website)
2. IEA style guide (also on website)
3. Papers from studies:
    - ICCS Assessment Framework version.4,
    - TEDS-M Conceptual Framework,
    - Draft paper on teacher salaries (2 drafts),
    - PIRLS Encyclopedia,
    - several first-draft chapters from SITES,
    - next-to-final draft of PIRLS International Report.

Dr Robitaille noted there is much interesting research being conducted, and PEC aims to be involved early in the process to offer support. He encouraged study directors to contact PEC as early as possible when preparing publications.

The Bruce H. Choppin and Richard M. Wolf awards were named in recognition of significant contributing scholars: to recognize not only the contributions they made, but also those of scholars using IEA data for research. This year there were three submissions for the Choppin award, and the Wolf award was made for first time, after some good submissions were received. Dr Robitaille encouraged GA members to obtain more copies of the brochure from the Secretariat or refer people to the online version to encourage students and faculty to contest the award.

The report was accepted.

Technical Executive Group report – GA 48/III/19

Dr Hans Wagemaker reminded participants that TEG meets twice yearly - once in connection with the GA, and once with AERA – the most recent meeting was in Chicago. Dr Wagemaker reiterated that the purpose of TEG is to focus on technical (procedural, statistical) issues in an advisory capacity. The group has a critical quality control function, and is moving towards a closer association with PEC. Sometimes the issues raised are very straightforward; TEG is concerned with ensuring that IEA publications meet the highest technical standards (as well as editorial standards). TEG is planning to formalize procedures so that a member of TEG is involved in editorial/review processes to ensure quality publications. The group is looking forward to this collaboration.

This week the Committee reviewed all projects, and found some potentially problematic issues with two projects (which will be expounded in detail on the project reports). Dr Wagemaker summarized the meeting:

- TEG agrees that TEDS could be a groundbreaking study; however it is very complex, and faces the additional challenge of surveying adult populations (i.e. lower response rates). TEG is anxious not to apply inappropriate standards that would lose important information and experience. The committee made recommendations for appropriate reporting if sampling standards cannot be met.
- The SITES project team was also offered strong recommendations for reporting.

Dr Wagemaker personally thanked members of TEG for sharing their deep experience and wide range of expertise, and noted that he wanted to make full use of their skills.

The report was accepted.

Session III 13:30 -15.00

Information from the World Bank – Marguerite Clarke

The presentation focused on what the World Bank is doing with respect to assessing learning outcomes in client (lower and middle income) countries. Dr Clarke presented the philosophy of the Bank in this regard, and discussed some of the feedback received from client countries. The slides from her presentation are available on the IEA website: http://www.iea.nl/48th_ga.html

The World Bank (WB) regards education as central to the reduction of poverty and inequality, and has aligned itself to UN Millennium Development Goals including Education for All (EFA) by 2015. The aim is to help countries develop the skills of graduates to make them marketable and able to function in the global economy. The publication "Educational Quality and Economic Growth" details this relationship: the better the quality of an education system, the more growth you see in GDP per capita. This relationship is very strong for lower and middle income countries. At a country level the World Bank focuses on helping countries implement large scale assessments (especially national). The assessments are regarded as central to the quality agenda, and are said to promote excellence and equity goals. They are discussed as part of EFA fast track initiatives. Reporting focuses on the effectiveness of various policy options in terms of their impact on student learning.

Countries often do not have internal capacity to develop assessments themselves, and need to bring in external assistance. Dr Clarke's current project involves developing a toolkit to help countries build capacity and develop their own national assessment. A publication for policy makers answers the question "why you would want a national assessment", by addressing: what questions the assessment can answer; what you need to do to put one in place; how national assessments differ from public examinations; and how to conduct the testing. Other publications explain how to develop instruments, implement the assessment, analyze data, and report and use results. Some of these publications also include software. The most difficult volume to write was "how to use results", because there is scant information or examples of WB client countries using the data. It is even harder to find examples of countries that have used the data to improve things.

Other related WB work includes early grade (1-3) reading assessments, which can provide diagnostic information for teachers. A pilot is being conducted in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Client countries have asked for advice on measuring quality at the tertiary level through rankings, and how to understand how the indicators can help countries move towards the development of world-class universities.

The World Bank provides support for assessments like TIMSS and PIRLS either as subcomponents of different projects, or under the global partnership program, known as the Program for the Assessment of Student Achievement (PASA). This program provides a framework under which to coordinate funding and carry out international assessment activities. Among Bank client countries there has been growth in participation in TIMSS and PIRLS, especially in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The Bank has evaluated the utility of participating in assessments, and the data show they do have impact. The current evaluation of PASA focuses on the extent to which the funding helped enhance capacity in two areas: 1. the IEA's ability to work with developing countries. 2. the ability of regional assessment programs (e.g. SAQMEC, PREAL) to develop capacity through the support of IEA.

Emerging issues and needs that lower and middle income countries have in relation to national and cross-national assessments include sustainability, coordination, and integration. Many countries have done large-scale assessments and now need to decide whether it should be an ongoing part of the system. When there are many different donors funding many different programs, the programs do not necessarily "talk" to each other. Therefore, it is desirable to coordinate the different assessment programs within-country so that they work together to offer sequential and coherent information on how students are progressing through the system. Quality of the assessments is also critical – if assessments are not good (often they are not in the beginning) the data they produce is not adequate for making decisions.

Cross-nationally there are three primary foci: 1. assessment "lite/light" (need for smaller, pared-down, more manageable version of assessments), 2. faster turnaround for policy making and decision making (need data to help make decisions), 3. training (secondary analysis of the data – how to use the data to analyze what is happening within the system). Other issues include costs of the assessments.

The presentation generated considerable discussion around the "assessment lite" concept. Dr Clarke clarified that these were the issues being raised by countries, and, regardless of whether there is a technically acceptable solution (e.g. using smaller samples?), the discussion needs to take place, and people need to understand what is and is not possible, and why. The aspects of the study that countries would like to "pare down" include the number of subjects per student, and the number of booklets – the aim is to reduce the complexity of implementation. Dr Wagemaker added that "assessment-lite" might instead be thought of as "pre-TIMSS", and could function to build capacity and the scaffolding required for conducting large-scale assessments within-countries. TIMSS and PIRLS have been designed for a specific purpose and specific populations. Where countries do not have the ability to achieve at a minimum level, this is very important information in itself. They are key issues that can be addressed by close examination of the data that links achievement outcomes to instructional and curricular data. The aim is to develop a tool for capacity building that will provide within-country classroom or regional information. There are, however, few shortcuts you can take that will not compromise the quality of information resulting from the assessment.

Dr Hegarty thanked Dr Clarke for a very informative presentation.

Using Student Assessments in Latin America - Jeffrey Puryear, PREAL

Dr Puryear noted that Chile was the regional pioneer in student assessments more than two decades ago. After 20 years, this presentation asks the questions: What do we now know about assessments in the region? What can we conclude?

National systems have grown substantially. In 1980 no countries in Latin America (LA) had one – now almost every country has a national assessment system. Most countries now have some kind of installed capacity and expect to do these assessments regularly. There are diverse institutional arrangements with these assessments: some assessments are conducted inside ministries, some outside ministries. There is no clear trend, nor is it clear which approach is best. It is clear, however, that quantity of national testing systems does not guarantee quality. Testing capacity has taken many steps forward but is still generally inadequate. Sub-national tests are also gaining popularity, which is consistent with the trend towards state decentralization in Latin America. Participation in LA is low. Only a minority (i.e. fewer than 50%) of LA countries have participated in a global achievement test – typically TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA. There is also a Latin America-wide test, started 10 years ago by UNESCO Latin America, for which the most recent round of testing was conducted in 2006.

Assessments in Latin America are typically sample-based; however, there is an incipient movement toward census-based testing. Math and language tests are the foundation and there is movement towards other subject areas. Similarly, while all countries used closed questions and multiple-choice tests, some countries are experimenting with constructed-response items. In most countries the testing systems have developed separately from the curriculum, so the relationship between testing and curriculum is tenuous at best. Most tests are low stakes – meaning the tests produce information but rarely determine consequences. Governments are not good at communicating test results: they disseminate information to government officials, but they almost never target the general public, local education officials, or parents. Consequently, the media have historically been the most effective communicators of this information.

The impact of international tests in LA has generally been weak - the major impact seems to be on public opinion. Governments often have not specified what they want to achieve by participating in the global tests. The biggest impact has been national concern about low scores and a subsequent push to improve standards. Tests in LA are not expensive; they represent a very small percent of national educational budget. Costs vary according to the type of sample, geography, number of languages, and whether constructed-response items are used. If technical quality is low and results are not disseminated or used – testing is expensive. However, if you do all the right things, it is one of the least expensive ways to improve educational quality.

How have tests been used in Latin America?

1. Increase public awareness – this has been the most common and effective use. Tests have provided empirical evidence that achievement was low and uneven. Good data changes the nature of the debate: the focus moved away from access and towards learning.
2. Improve policy – this is what people expect that tests will do. Most countries have not deliberately done this. Increasingly, countries/systems are developing interventions for schools that do not meet standards.
3. Conduct research and evaluations – studies are determinants of learning.
4. Establish national education standards. Testing has forced policy makers to look at what students are supposed to learn, and influenced a movement to establish learning standards and criterion-referenced tests.
5. Target schools/student groups for special support. Some countries identify schools where test scores are lowest and give them special inputs, and change the way the school is managed
6. Improve teaching. Tests change how teachers think about what they are supposed to teach: "whatever is tested will be taught". There is no evidence tests are used to develop teacher training.
7. Identify individual children at risk. Need census-system to do this.
8. Promote accountability – identify schools/teachers for rewards or sanctions. Setting school goals is easy for the media/general public to

understand and can facilitate school choice (where this is possible). Parents are currently more concerned with atmosphere, discipline, and SES of students than they are test scores. Accountability in education is still a new concept and not well understood.

In conclusion, the usage of test scores is difficult to predict. Governments have not started with a clear idea of what to do with the test scores, but the availability of data has prompted changes. Once information comes out people start to think about it and it begins to take on a life of its own, so that test scores might be used more than we expect – but we don't know about it yet.

Discussion focused on the lessons that might be learned both from Latin America and elsewhere, and how the large-scale assessment data might be used to improve teaching and learning. Slides from the presentation can be found at http://www.iea.nl/48th_ga.html

Dr Hegarty thanked Dr Puryear for a comprehensive and informative presentation.

Dr Hegarty proposed to move the finances section from Session XI and invited Mr Jur Hartenberg to present.

Financial Report GA-48/III/20-22

The Financial documents: Annual Report 2006 (GA-48/III/20), Review of Fees for 2007 (GA-48/III/21) and Budget 2008 (GA-48/III/22) were introduced by the IEA Financial Manager Mr Jur Hartenberg. Mr Hartenberg noted that due to expansion at the DPC, fixed assets have increased. One of the most challenging parts of the balance sheet is the receivables position (i.e. the money not paid and owed by members and study participants). More specifically, $2.2 million in membership fees are still outstanding (part of it dating back to 2005). The IEA is losing interest on the unpaid amounts, and more seriously, is in a position of diminished liquidity, thus compromising its ability to meet financial obligations.

In order to manage this problem, IEA will now be sending twice-yearly (March, September) summaries of unpaid membership and participation fees to GA-representatives in order to encourage timely payment. A proposal to introduce penalties for late payment has not been discounted.

Mr Hartenberg noted the cash position looks sound, but is only just enough to cover total liabilities. The balance sheet total increased by about 28%, reflecting a higher level of activities. The profit and loss sheet indicates that the operational result is close to break even. In 2006 a loss was predicted for the current year; current analyses reveal expectations of a result close to break even for 2007. The budget for 2008 is expected to be close to the 2007 result. Budgeting for the DPC part has been done according to only those contracts that have already been signed, so revenue might increase if projects currently in the pipeline are realized.

The impact on revenues of the fall of the US dollar since 2001 has been considerable. Calculations for TIMSS and PIRLS budgets have been affected by the downward trend of the USD against the EUR. IEA revenues have all been expressed in USD; however 35% of costs are in EUR. The consequence of the decline of the USD is a budget result of -8% for TIMSS and PIRLS, which represents a figure between one and two million dollars. To date, participating

Euro-currency countries have received a substantial discount in fees due to decline of the USD. The additional effect of US subsidies means that countries are paying less for participation in these studies than the actual study costs.

The proposed solution to the currency effect is for IEA to send invoices in both currencies for future studies. For example, if the study participation fee is set at 40, 000, countries will be invoiced for USD 20, 000 and EUR 20, 000. This is the fairest and most manageable system from the perspective of IEA.

Dr Wagemaker emphasized that the net asset position includes what is owed to IEA – and when countries are late with their payments, this makes things financially very tight. IEA also has financial obligations to meet, and as such needs participants to honor obligations in membership fees and participation fees. At the beginning of a project IEA pre-funds a lot of project activities; in addition, the organization loses interest on funds not received. Furthermore, IEA is required by law to maintain a minimum cash reserve that it may not go below; currently finances are critically close to that level. When IEA sends an invoice we at least expect as a minimum an acknowledgment and response.

The conclusion of the IEA Secretariat is that fees will need to rise. In one respect the increase will come through invoicing in two currencies; however fees will be increased additionally to this because the current level is unsustainable for IEA. PIRLS countries will be invoiced for five years of participation rather than the current four; so that total study fees for PIRLS 2011 will be €75,000 + $75, 000. Fees for TIMSS will also rise, and for TIMSS 2011 total fees will be €90, 000 + $90, 000 for one grade, and €130 000 + $130 000 for two grades.

Questions centered primarily on changes to the structure for charging fees. There was some discussion of how the change would be implemented and what the implications would be.

<u>Session IV</u> 15.30-17.00

Discussion groups – GA-48/I/10 – Policy paper on IEA future activities
General Assembly representatives, Standing Committee members, and observers broke into five small groups to discuss future activities of IEA. Results of the discussions are scheduled to be reported back to the General Assembly during Session X.

Tuesday, October 9
<u>Session V</u> 09.00 – 10.30

TIMSS 2007 progress report - GA-48/II/11
Dr Ina Mullis, co-director of the TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center, reported on progress in TIMSS 2007 since the previous General Assembly when instrument development had just been completed. Preparations for data collection since that time included translation verification (45 countries at grade 4 in 28 languages; 59 countries at grade 8 in 35 languages; development of an International Arabic translation, which each country testing in Arabic adapted to their national context); training of International Quality Control monitors; finalizing scoring guides; and training scorers. Data collection has now been completed for TIMSS 07, representing more than half a million students in 63 countries and 68 educational systems; trend measurement was conducted for more than 50 countries. Dr Mullis noted that the study acts as impetus for a number of countries to revise their curricula, and that this is reflected in the

TIMSS 2007 Encyclopedia, which will be published. The ISC is currently preparing for scaling and analysis, which will involve 14 cognitive scales and 12 achievement scales. It is a huge effort, especially for trend data. Curriculum questionnaires have just been completed.

Output from the study will consist of two international reports, one covering mathematics (grades 4 & 8) and the other covering science (grades 4 & 8). Dr Mullis summarized the content of the international reports, which will be drafted by June 2008. The international press release is scheduled for December 9, 2008, and the international database will be released by May 2009.

Questions focused on the timing of and access to the international database, given that it is of major interest to everyone involved in the study. Drs Mullis and Martin reiterated on behalf of the ISC that they will do their best to turn around the data as quickly as possible; however, this depends to a large extent on countries' ability to respond to DPC enquiries and deliver the data in a timely fashion. The presentation can be viewed at http://www.iea.nl/48th_ga.html.

Dr Hegarty thanked Dr Mullis and the TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center.

TIMSS Advanced 2008 progress report - GA-48/II/12

Dr Michael Martin, co-director of the TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center, reported on progress in TIMSS-Advanced 2008. He reminded delegates that this was a replication of the advanced portion of TIMSS 1995, focusing on school-leaving students with advanced preparations in mathematics and physics. Since the last General Assembly, the field trial has been completed and the instruments finalized for the main data collection. Dr Martin noted the substantial development Norway had contributed to the project, in enthusiasm, resources, hard work and competence; he made special mention of NRC Dr Liv Sissel Grønmo.

Dr Martin noted that TIMSS-Advanced is a very challenging study, particularly with respect to sampling; the NRCs who are working on TIMSS-A are all very experienced both in working on the studies and in the subject area. The group of participating countries is substantially smaller than those that had initially expressed interest; however, there may still be possibilities for other countries to join. The predominant study design is to use separate school samples for each subject; also popular is a design using the same schools with the assessment focus rotated between classes. There is a large proportion of constructed-response items, so preparations and training for scorers is rather detailed. The presentation can be viewed at http://www.iea.nl/48th_ga.html.

One important issue is whether the items in TIMSS-A will reflect coverage in the national curriculum. Dr Martin noted that most countries do not teach the entire TIMSS-A curriculum to all students at this level. A curriculum questionnaire and the teacher questionnaire will be used to collect data for a curriculum-test matching analysis. Dr Martin stated that options for reporting are still open; one possibility is to include descriptive statistics of the percentage of the population who can achieve at a certain level on the various tasks, by conducting an analysis of the achieved curriculum across different countries.

Dr Eckhard Klieme commented that policy makers might be reluctant to participate in this study because populations may not be comparable. One solution could be to offer the study to students at the beginning of their tertiary education. Dr Martin advised that because TIMSS-A includes a study of trends, it was important to use an identical (as far as this is possible) population to that used in 1995 but he thought the idea was worthy of further consideration.

Dr Hegarty thanked Dr Martin and reiterated that this study is in very good shape. He noted that it is attentive to the particular needs of particular countries, noting that there still a tiny window to join. The report was received.

Dr Martin reported back from conversations held during the coffee break following his presentation and stated the TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center would consider working with TIMSS-Advanced at the tertiary level, possibly with an option to assess students in September/October 2008. The results from students in tertiary education might be included in a different section of the report than those for students in the original (late secondary) target population.

SITES 2006 Progress Report - GA-48/II/13

The study was introduced by Professor Tjeerd Plomp, who explained that Dr Hans Pelgrum would discuss the main points of the study, and Dr Nancy Law would present the findings.

Dr Pelgrum explained that the main activity of the past year was writing the main report, based on data from 22 participating systems, almost 9000 schools and 35000 teachers of mathematics and science. The report is scheduled for release in March 2008. Dr Pelgrum noted that the last 20 years has been characterized by an increase in "informatization", and IEA has monitored developments almost from the start (COMPED 1987-93, SITES M1 1997-99, SITES M2 1999-2002). The major concerns of policy makers have shifted from an emphasis on access to equipment and software, towards concern with the computer literacy of students and integration of ICT with existing subjects. Curricula have changed to allow for teaching with computers, and reports from around the world have expressed interest in pedagogical innovations to achieve new educational goals, emphasizing the need for new approaches and methods to cultivate 21st century skills.

The primary foci of SITES are: educational change and pedagogical innovation; and the conditions for ICT education and learning. The study investigates leadership, infrastructure, staff development, how teaching and learning take place, and the role of ICT.

Dr Nancy Law discussed findings of the study in three areas:

1. impacts on school conditions
2. impacts on students (teacher perceptions)
3. indications of strategies to foster ICT use for improved learning.

Questions focused on the findings and the recommendations; Dr Law noted that the study leaders would avoid making in-depth recommendations because they don't know enough about each individual country context. She invited countries to explore the issues further. The discussion also raised the question of a student assessment involving ICT, and Professor Plomp mentioned that student assessment is being considered in a proposal for a follow-up to SITES.

Dr Hegarty thanked Dr Law, Dr Pelgrum, and Professor Plomp. He adjourned the session at 10.30.

<u>Session VI</u> 11.00 – 12.30

Dr Hegarty invited Dr Michael Martin from the TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center to present the progress report and preliminary findings from PIRLS 2006. Dr Hegarty emphasized the confidentiality of the results, and reminded delegates they may not discuss the results outside of the meeting until the data are officially released.

PIRLS 2006 Progress Report - GA-48/II/14

Dr Martin restated that PIRLS operates on a 5-year cycle, and PIRLS 2006 offered trend data for those countries that participated in 2001 and baseline data for new countries. The encyclopedia describes the educational systems in participating countries in a more qualitative way, and this cycle included a curriculum questionnaire for the first time. PIRLS 2006 collected data from 215000 students in 45 participating systems (17 new) in 40 countries, working in 45 languages. Dr Martin advised that the international data release was scheduled for November 28th 10am EST, and the international database was due to be released February 8, 2008. The presentation can be viewed at http://www.iea.nl/48th_ga.html.

TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center co-director Dr Ina Mullis presented a confidential preview of the PIRLS 2006 results. The ensuing discussion included questions related to specific content of the results, and about how the results can be disseminated. Some members suggested that the international press release be mailed to General Assembly representatives; however the general feeling was that NRCs should be responsible for informing GAs.

Dr Wagemaker remarked that discussion on the results of PIRLS 2006 illustrate the potential of trend studies for informing the policy debate; however, it requires strategic investment. He emphasized the importance of secondary analysis with a hypothetical example: a country showing decline in performance, experiencing a concurrent or recent increase in enrolments from disadvantaged sectors of the population. He suggested there may be utility in asking countries that have experienced major changes to prepare papers exploring what makes a difference. This would help to inform the wider community, and could contribute to the secondary analysis monograph series.

A further issue concerns the relationship between age and grade. Drs Martin and Mullis explained that age and grade are inextricably intertwined, and Dr Wagemaker added that the problem of separating age and grade effects exists both in studies that are age-based and in studies that are sampled according to grade. Dr Hegarty acknowledged this was an important issue when comparing diverse educational systems and there is scope to explore it further.

PIRLS TIMSS 2011 GA 48/II/15

Dr Michael Martin, co-director of the TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center, explained that the cycles for TIMSS and PIRLS overlap only once every 20 years, and the study directors want to encourage people to think about 2011 now in order to maximize the opportunities. He cautioned that the individual studies will not be distorted too far from their original concept, as both will continue on the regular cycle (four years TIMSS, five years PIRLS) after 2011. What TIMSS/PIRLS 2011 offers is the chance to concurrently assess the core subject areas (i.e. reading, mathematics, science). This affords the opportunity to ask policy-relevant questions such as: What policies are equally effective across all 3 core areas? Are some policies relatively more effective? Furthermore, the research might explore achievement gaps (e.g. on gender, instructional language, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic level). The effect of home factors (home resources, early childhood activities, parents attitudes, home-school interaction) on core subject areas could also be investigated.

Dr Martin commented there were three possibilities for structuring the data collection:

1. Same students (preferred)
2. Same schools, separate classes (or split classes: half TIMSS, half PIRLS)
3. Same cohort, separate schools (if enough schools)

Dr Martin said the ISC was considering all options, including the possibility for integrated questionnaires. Concerning the workload of students, Dr Martin acknowledged it was an extra burden, but said the two assessments might be separated by several weeks in order to offset this. The potential payoff of analytic power of the combined data is huge, so should be taken very seriously. Slides from the presentation can be viewed at http://www.iea.nl/48th_ga.html.

Other commentators mentioned it was important to look carefully at how the samples are defined, and acknowledged that this study in particular demanded considerable preparatory work. One person suggested the possibility of a cross-curricular option or booklet, an idea the ISC co-directors found interesting.

Dr Hegarty thanked Drs Martin and Mullis, and adjourned the session at 12.50pm.

<u>Session VII</u> 14.00 – 15.30

Bridging IEA studies and policy making

Dr Hegarty introduced the panel of speakers who had been invited to present their views on this important issue: Mr Adel Al-Sayed (Qatar), Ms Lorna Bertrand (England), Mr Pierre Brochu (Canada), and Ms Maia Miminoshvili (Georgia).

<u>Adel Al-Sayed (Qatar)</u>

Mr Al-Sayed noted that educational reforms began in 2004, and Qatar has participated in international studies (PISA 2006, PIRLS 2006, and TIMSS 2007) to collect system-level information for the purposes of: assessing baseline performance; verification of national results; integration with other international or national data; benchmarking; and ongoing monitoring of (the progress of) change. The national assessment is based on curriculum standards, which are aligned to international benchmarks.

Mr Al-Sayed emphasized that when communicating and disseminating the results, the report must be written **to** the decision maker. It is important that decision makers receive (only) the relevant reports, and that the language and content be tailored to the audience. Reports should be clear and written specifically for the intended audience, taking into account the cultural context and the effect of different styles of writing/language use on different audiences. The presentation can be viewed at http://www.iea.nl/48th_ga.html.

<u>Lorna Bertrand (England)</u>

Ms Bertrand described how the English Government has used the results of previous studies to provide baseline and benchmarking information, and also as independent evidence of attainment (supplementary to that obtained through the national assessment system). They have used the encyclopedias to learn about other systems and approaches; however, Ms Bertrand observed that more use could be made of the encyclopedias if they were more focused on the reforms implemented in other countries since the last cycle of the study. International studies also provide some information about what does (and doesn't) work, they can act as a driver for change, or a confirmation that the system is on track. As an example, Ms Bertrand referred to TIMSS 1995, in which England's results were mediocre. The evidence from this survey helped to inform a new numeracy strategy. She suggested that secondary analysis could be used more extensively to make better use of the evidence collected.

Ms Bertrand advised listeners to try to remove the "fear" of studies even before results are published. This means presenting it to policy makers as an interesting project, rather than a series of acronyms and large reports. England employs national strategies staff to bring the messages from PIRLS to teachers in the workforce. PIRLS schools receive individual feedback, not on performance but on attitudinal data, and each school is encouraged to use this feedback for self-evaluation. During November, England will hold a seminar for policy makers whilst the PIRLS press release occurs. This ensures researchers can deliver the findings to policy makers before the results are published in the press.

A large part of England's strategy is the development of an "education action plan". This plan involves answering such questions as "what does the data tell us", "what questions do we need to ask", "who needs to know", and "what needs to be done"?

In bridging the gap between IEA studies and policy making, the relationship between National Research Coordinators and policy makers is critically important. Close relationships between the people executing the study and those writing relevant policy are essential if the research is to inform policy in any consistent, meaningful way.

Questions centered on the spirit of cooperation emphasized in this report, and Ms Bertrand explained that researchers and policy makers have regular meetings at certain parts of the cycle, and can be in daily touch (phone, email) sometimes. They attempt to raise issues before they become a problem; maintain regular informal communication in addition to progress reports; trust each other and make sure goals are clear. The keywords were: communication and trust.

Pierre Brochu (Canada)
Mr Brochu explained that in Canada there is no federal Ministry of Education or national agenda in education - because education all occurs at a provincial level. In this sense, there is no "Canada" in terms of education. The Canadian provinces have been very active in IEA studies for many years, and selected provinces have elected to participate in multiple studies. Provinces see real value in these studies, particularly trend analyses. The major impetus is to look at changes in their own performance over time; provinces are also interested in comparisons with neighboring provinces, and investigating the nature of and reasons for observed differences. Furthermore, provinces want to learn from the best, regardless of where they are and what the prevailing culture, political values, etc might be. The aim is to take good ideas and make them your own.

Canadian researchers are very interested in curriculum mapping and gap analysis (what is assessed, what should be taught, what is taught). TIMSS and

PIRLS offer an excellent vehicle for this sort of measurement and analysis. Mr Brochu referred delegates to the monographs series on the TIMSS-Canada website for examples of how results can be presented.

The integration of the assessment with policy focuses on what the differences are and why they are so, and what the implications are for instruction. Results help suggest to educators the areas where they could improve strategies and resources. Within six months of the international release, a more detailed release of local results is organized. Results are analyzed by purposes, gender, and process. The aim is to provide (confidential) results to the lowest possible entity for which you have reliable results. In some cases this will be individual school boards; it is important to deliver results with sensitivity and in confidence. The key message from Canada is to look at your own practice, the practice of your neighbors, and practices internationally. The presentation can be viewed at http://www.iea.nl/48th_ga.html.

Maia Miminoshvili (Georgia)

Ms Miminoshvili explained that in Georgia, international assessments are used as indicator of where they are currently and where they need to go. Recent educational reforms have been huge, and require precise indicators and permanent monitoring. Georgia is now in three international surveys (PIRLS, TIMSS, TEDS-M) and is using them to try to evaluate reforms. In the case of PIRLS, participation is important for two main reasons:

1. to assess achievement and context; and try to enhance literacy and reading skills
2. to share experiences of successful countries/educational systems through a comparative study. Results reveal inadequacies in their own system – i.e. what should be changed and why

In her discussion of results from PIRLS 2006, she noted that effects can only really be evaluated after the event, so PIRLS 2006 can be seen as baseline study; effectiveness of reforms can be evaluated next cycle.

Ms Miminoshvili outlined the major next steps:

- Prepare detailed national report
- Set up group of experts to prepare recommendations for primary teachers
- Publish reports and make them available to every primary school teacher
- Share experience of successful countries in PIRLS 2006
- Workshops/meetings with primary teachers around country
- Workshops/meetings with teacher preparation institutions
- PR activities

Her presentation can be viewed at http://www.iea.nl/48th_ga.html.

Open discussion: Bridging IEA studies and policy making

During the open discussion, participants commented generally on some of the challenges involved with bringing results from IEA studies into the policy debate.

It was suggested that reference to an international standard is more meaningful than comparing country means to the international average; it is important to define the appropriate benchmark. This means focusing on the target level of achievement in terms of the capability expressed by students at that level. The percentage of students achieving at a certain level might be more informative than the position of your country in relation to others on the international table; it also makes clear the percentage achieving at the lowest levels, whereas a focus on means tends to occlude this.

When interpreting results, it is prudent to investigate (and, if possible, remove) background differences between countries. Some influences (e.g. parental educational level) are not under (current) government control. There is a danger in this approach, however, which is to conclude the positive relationship between background and achievement is a kind of destiny, and therefore to expect low achievement from poor-background students.

Delegates expressed frustration about the common experience of the debate entering the public arena via the press, but clouded by opinion and (frequently) misinformation. They noted that all steps involved in developing and administering the assessments are very precise and controlled; however, at the level of dissemination it is rather more ad hoc. It was suggested that IEA could try to systematically collect the kind of criticism that is leveled at the studies from various sources, and to offer systematic responses to this kind of criticism.

At a national level, report writers should consider very carefully how to communicate the international reports. Reports are read by very few people, and typically are not read by those who *should* read the results. Messages arising from the press release and the reaction of the press to the press release sometimes make headlines, but are frequently not scientifically based. It is important that reports are situated in context and that researchers communicate how this survey relates to other surveys and what differences in results between surveys mean. This work should not be left up to people who are unqualified to discuss it. The understanding of how the surveys are used and can be used is currently very weak.

Several participants commented on the need to provide timely results. There is a conflict between the need for solid, secondary analysis, and the demands of policy makers and practitioners who need data now. For example, a government might say, ""we want a national report within 6 months. Just give us results". Some time later, they are asking for the background data. If people want the background information it will cost in terms of time, and this is true of both national and international reports. There is an inherent conflict in this scenario, because everyone wants the information "yesterday", yet quality analyses take considerable time. Dr Wagemaker explained that IEA and the ISCs take this into account. Countries have the data well in advance (6-9 months) of the international press release, so have already identified the important messages (e.g. Georgia, England in PIRLS). Within a few weeks of international release they receive international highlights. International Study Centres simply do not have the resources (even if they had the knowledge) to address all the issues that might be of interest. Others pointed out that there can be problems when international organizations try to give advice. Without a deep knowledge of the country context, the information might be useless or wrong. It should be the job of the country to do this work themselves, so reports on national data should be made by the national centre, not international.

Discussion on the communication between the academic and political processes raised the topic of "broker agents", who could act between researchers and politicians to translate information into useable language. Others thought it might be helpful for the national centre to draw some guidelines to inform the interpretation of the results, by outlining what can or cannot be concluded from the study. This might help avoid the situation of interested agents hijacking the results by (inappropriately) projecting their own agendas and constructs onto the findings. It was suggested that sometimes there may be system-level problems that prevent the easy flow of information between researchers and policy-makers e.g. university researchers may not have access to or contact with policy makers.

The final point of the discussion concerned the timeliness of publication of the national reports. It was suggested that rather than publishing a 300-page national book at the same time the international report is released, it would be more prudent to publish a 40-50 page report starting from the questions which are of national interest. The critically important issues tend to repeat over the years, and therefore are relatively easy to anticipate. On the other hand, there should be a much longer process involved in preparing national reports because there are so many questions that can be asked of the data. Which issues are the most important; which are of most interest? The report can be sent to Members of Parliament, Ministers, schools, etc. One problem with releasing the national report at the same time as the international report is that results from the national report might be viewed suspiciously in this context. In other words, the report could be interpreted as an attempted cover-up (for poor results). A final remark considered that the analysis of results and interpretation of data should be a separate task (performed by separate people) than drawing the policy conclusions. Those responsible for the research can draw on the science of how to conduct research, yet may know nothing about how to interpret it for policy conclusions. It can be difficult to get policy makers to explain how they do it.

Dr Hegarty thanked all speakers for their stimulating, informative, and different presentations, sparking a very helpful discussion. He noted there was a growing body of understanding of links between research and policy, and between research and practice. The chair adjourned the session at 15.45.

Session VIII 16.15-17.00

Special motion
An additional topic was added to the Agenda: the establishment of criteria for reporting achievement and contractual findings for sub-national jurisdictions that take part as benchmarking participants in IEA studies.

Proposed: Lynne Whitney (New Zealand)
Seconded: Lorna Bertrand (England) and Jackie Horne (Scotland)

Megan Chamberlain, representing Lynne Whitney, introduced the proposal to discuss how benchmarking participants are treated within studies. In PIRLS 2006 results for the Canadian provinces are presented in the body of the main table; Ms Chamberlain argued that this is confusing for policy makers and poses practical problems for interpretation.

Dr Hans Wagemaker explained that Canada's educational system illustrates in part the complexity of the issue, because there are many different kinds of educational systems participating in IEA studies. The Standing Committee had considerable discussion of this issue and chose not to make a recommendation. This is an issue only for TIMSS 2007, and only concerns Canadian provinces. When they initially joined IEA, the provinces were individual members; things changed over time, and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada became the representative body to IEA. The current understanding with provinces is that provinces will appear in the body of the main international tables, as with PIRLS 2006. For 2011 and beyond they will be treated as benchmarking entities. This question was highlighted with PIRLS 2006, because in this study sufficient data were collected for Canada to meet the sampling standards of a country. Despite this, it is not up to IEA to report the data as "Canada", because provinces are fiercely independent in their education systems. Dr Wagemaker introduced Mr Pierre Brochu to describe the issue from the perspective of Canada, and said that it was for the General Assembly to review the TIMSS 07 situation.

Mr Brochu thanked Dr Wagemaker and the representatives from New Zealand, England, and Scotland for raising the subject at the IEA General Assembly and giving him the opportunity to present his case. He explained that in Canada there is no federal Ministry of Education, but rather 11 different entities that decide whether or not to participate individually. If there is sufficient interest they may discuss whether they want to be represented as "Canada". The steps for determining representation in the report are as follows: first, it is necessary to meet the sampling requirements of IEA (i.e. valid and representative). If IEA says the sample is sufficient to represent "Canada", the Council of Ministers of Education takes this to the provinces to obtain cooperation. The provinces are the ultimate entity for education according to the constitution, and the decision to be reported as a province or as "Canada" is up to them.

Mr Brochu noted that TIMSS 2007 is now 90% complete, and Canadian participants have done everything independently on the understanding that provinces will be included in the report in their own right. Each province pays their own participation fees and incurs high operating costs. They would be very disappointed to find the rules of game changed now. The same thing is now happening with ICCS and TEDS-M: provinces have agreed to participate in these studies individually

Dr Hegarty reiterated that the Standing Committee did not have a clear view on TIMSS 2007 but it did on TIMSS 2011. The recommendation of Standing Committee for 2011 was not to include provinces in the main table in 2011. He opened the floor for comments and questions.

Ms Bertrand clarified that the request to establish criteria for reporting sub-national data was not an attempt to stop the individual provincial results from being reported, but was a question of consistency, and of avoiding confusion and misinterpretation. She argued that the rules were changed for PIRLS 2006, claiming that Canadian provinces have been benchmarking participants for previous cycles of PIRLS and TIMSS: in these studies there was an aggregated score for the participating provinces reported above the line as "Canada (*Province 1*, *Province 2*)"; the disaggregated scores for each of those provinces was reported below the line. Ms Bertrand claimed there was no consultation with the GA on the changes made to PIRLS 2006. This proposal is to revert to the practice that was being used before. ?

Dr Wagemaker clarified that there was no suggestion IEA would consider sub-national jurisdictions from any other country – this was just an appeal to the history of Canadian provinces in IEA. Furthermore, he reiterated that this discussion only concerned TIMSS 2007, because IEA has set clear guidelines for future studies. IEA has an existing undertaking with the Canadian provinces for TIMSS 2007 and this is why the topic is being debated now.

Dr Klieme explained that this was an important issue for Germany, and it has been discussed within the national (German) IEA group. In Germany, the 16 independent states and educational systems are keen to be described as independent educational systems. German researchers have used the IEA instruments for national studies. He suggested Canadian provinces might do this, oversample, and prepare a national report (for provincial-level reporting) in addition to the international report (reporting only international entities). In Germany it was decided in constitutional reform that the federal state and 16 *Länder* share responsibility for international comparisons and monitoring of education quality. As a symbolic action that is very important, because Germany does not want to see states acting as international bodies on an international scale. If Canadian provinces want to be treated individually, he argued, they should apply for individual membership to IEA – this is a symbolic action to demonstrate they are independent. As long as Canada as an entity is a member of IEA, Germany believes "Canada" should be the level of reporting. Professor Lehman asked the General Assembly to take an outside perspective, arguing if more than one jurisdiction is reported in the international table, that country is overrepresented in the table. Germany (like Canada) could meet the sampling standards at the state/province level, so there are reasons to be careful at this point. Reiterating Dr Klieme's argument, Professor Lehmann reminded delegates that Canada pays one country membership fee. It does pay participation fees by jurisdiction (province) because each jurisdiction adds to the marginal costs of the study. In his opinion, the below-the-line system is an acceptable compromise.

Dr Wagemaker explained that IEA welcomes benchmarking participants to the studies; however, it has no intention of dealing with benchmarking entities by presenting them in main part of table. Benchmarking participants are reported in a separate part of the table.

Ms Horne suggested that the longer-term issue concerning benchmarking jurisdictions might be solved by reporting them in the main body of the report, but in annexes, rather than in the main table. Ms Bertrand argued that by reporting benchmarking participants in the main table for the first time in PIRLS 2006, it opens the suggestion that "if Canada can do it, why cant we?" From the outside, it looks like Canada gets special treatment.

Dr Hegarty asked for further comments, then referred to the proposed motion and sought clarification on what was proposed.

Ms Bertrand proposed a motion to revert to the practice from PIRLS 2001 and to report sub-nationals (Canada) in a separate part of the table for TIMSS 2007. The aggregated Canada, with provinces in brackets, would be reported in the main table, and disaggregated provinces under the table on the main page. Ms Chamberlain added that in TIMSS 2003 the provinces were reported as benchmarking participants, and that this was different from PIRLS 2001.

Dr Mullis reiterated Dr Wagemaker's comment that benchmarking participants are encouraged; however, she stated that the decision to participate as a country should be the country's (i.e. Canada's). The ISC would respect that, rather than aggregate the data from provinces to construct "Canada". She clarified that if requested the ISC will aggregate the data – but that this would not be done without country permission. She added that it should be more like TIMSS 2003 if you make a distinction in the overall list or in a separate part of the table.

Ms Bertrand proposed a modified motion:
To revert to the manner of reporting data for Canadian provinces as it was done for TIMSS 2003, where it was made clear that they were benchmarking participants, and the disaggregated data from the provinces were reported below the main table.

Proposed:	Lorna Bertrand (England)
Seconded:	Megan Chamberlain (New Zealand)
In favour:	28
Against:	1
Abstentions:	1

Dr Hegarty proposed a short extension of the session to 17.45 to provide more time for small group discussions.

Small group discussion
Participants split into prearranged small groups to discuss the dissemination of the results of IEA studies. The results of the discussion are to be presented during Session X.

Wednesday, October 10

<u>Session IX</u> 09.00 – 10.30

ICCS 2009 progress report - GA-48/III/16
ICCS Study Director Dr John Ainley thanked the three-member consortium responsible for the project (Australian Council for Educational Research, Australia; National Foundation for Educational Research, England; Laboratorio di Pedagogia Sperimentale, Italy) and partners at the IEA Data Processing and Research Center, Germany; and IEA Secretariat, Netherlands) for their contributions. He reminded the Assembly that the International Civics and Citizenship Study (ICCS) was an international comparative study of the outcomes of civics and citizenship education, and would be conducted in around 38 countries. The field trial is due to begin next week and will conclude at the end of the year, in samples of 25 or more schools in each country.

A special feature of this study is that in addition to the international core, there will also be regional (Europe and Latin America and possibly also Asian) modules. The ISC is working with countries to address particular issues for regions. The assessment framework was finalized in April this year, and is a public document on the ICCS website.

The geographical distribution of the consortium is wide; however, video conferences are held every 2-3 weeks, and the Project Advisory Committee also regularly meets electronically and in person. There are regional meetings for the regional modules, an active working website, and a newsletter that is sent to interested parties every 6-8 weeks.

The population is grade 8 (or equivalent) students with the option to also add grade 9 (for trend measurement). There has been no attempt to link teachers to the sampled classrooms, for two reasons: 1. civics and citizenship is not necessarily taught as a subject, and 2. civics and citizenship might be embedded in the broader school curriculum. (In response to a question later in the session, Dr Ainley responded that in cases where countries have specific lessons on civics and citizenship, it will be possible to look at the content of lessons. There is significant variation between countries, so national options can be tailored).

Each country will complete a National Contexts Survey to provide background information. This is not a narrative account but a structured framework to provide relevant information online. It has been available since March 2007 and has been fully completed by 24 countries. This will be analyzed in a brief report by 2008 – but will still be available for new countries joining the study or those who have not completed it yet. Dr Ainley briefly described the instruments and review process, and presented the study timeline.

During the discussion that followed, the concepts of sustainability and environmental concerns were raised. Dr Ainley noted that "environmental responsibility" is mentioned in the framework as an aspect of citizenship, and is an aspect of some sub-domains. The ISC had considered giving it greater prominence, as a number of countries wanted to ensure it was covered.

Others questioned if the study will draw conclusions about different ways of teaching citizenship, and also whether it would be possible to complete more elements online. Dr Ainley responded that they are hoping to survey a large number of teachers within the school, and to gain a sense of the school climate. It is hoped they can use the National Contexts Survey to explain differences between countries. The use of online materials will continue in an iterative process, and DPC has some expertise after SITES and other studies. The field trial will indicate if it is a worthwhile option for ICCS.

Dr Hegarty thanked Dr Ainley for his presentation, and commended the excellent design of the study, noting there was still time for countries to join.

TEDS-M Progress Report - GA-48/III/17

Director of TEDS-M, Dr Maria Teresa Tatto, introduced co-directors Drs John Schwille and Glen Rowley who were present, and thanked co-directors Drs Sharon Senk, Lawrence Ingvarson, and Ray Peck (who were not). Dr Tatto explained that work on TEDS-M was collaborative, and the leadership team held twice-monthly conferences to discuss the project. Dr Tatto described the purpose of TEDS-M as to inform and improve the policy and practice of future mathematics teacher education. It is the first cross-national assessment of outcomes of tertiary education, and will explore links between policy, practices, and outcomes of mathematics teacher education. The framework is posted on the TEDS-M website and currently 19 countries are participating.

The study was launched in February 2006 with the first NRC meeting, and the field trial was conducted February-June 2007, with results presented at the 3rd NRC meeting in Taipei. The study faces considerable challenges in meeting response rates; instruments were dramatically reduced in size after the field trial. The main data collection is commencing now, and will end in May 2008. Dr Tatto noted that supplemental funding for the project had been obtained from the National Science Foundation (NSF) of the United States of America.

Discussions focused on the issue of response rates and the importance of safeguarding the integrity of the assessment. Dr Tatto explained that the TEDS-M team encouraged NRCs to work with participating institutions to help them understand how the survey intends to improve teacher education (to inform policy, and educate policy makers of the challenges in educating mathematics teachers); and to encourage participation. Furthermore, she claimed fatigue was a bigger issue in the field trial than resistance, so the shortened instruments may make a difference to response rates.

Others questioned the policy relevance of the study and whether the project might produce useful information for retaining existing teachers, who will make a difference now (i.e. not in 10 years time). Dr Tatto pointed out that countries mobilize policy at different rates. She reiterated that the aim and the greatest impact of the study will be to help understand what it takes to educate mathematics teachers. Dr Schwille noted that in most countries new teachers do take a long time to influence the teaching course, and expressed the ISC's hope that countries will follow-up on the results and think about the professional development of practicing teachers. For example, if future teachers are found to have knowledge gaps, this may suggest certain things about existing teachers. Teacher-training programs use a lot of resources so it is important to know they are effective (even if changes will take long time to effect).

New study in ICT

Hans Wagemaker, John Ainley and Tjeerd Plomp

Dr Wagemaker introduced two discussion papers: the first, by Professor Tjeerd Plomp, outlines and discusses the author's thoughts about future studies in IT. A second paper, by Dr John Ainley of the Australian Council for Educational Research, describes an example of an IT-in-education study from Australia.

SITES – Status of IT in Education Studies: towards a follow-up of SITES 2006.
Professor Tjeerd Plomp, in cooperation with Dr Hans Pelgrum, prepared this paper to stimulate discussion of how IEA might continue activities investigating ICT in education. Envisaging such a study as a follow-up to SITES 2006, possibilities presented include a "cycle" of SITES studies, in which perspectives of IT in relation to curriculum are measured on a regular basis; and an IT student achievement test. The timing of the first follow-up study is constrained by other concurrent international assessments, but early suggestions are for sometime between 2012 and 2014. Professor Plomp observed that achievement testing in IT poses a big challenge, because it currently is not clear what should be the focus and what is most important – this is compounded by the observation that "IT literacy" means different things in different countries.

Assessing Computer Literacy using Simulated and Real World Tasks
Dr Ainley presented the paper he prepared with Dr Julian Fraillon from the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), describing a study done in Australia and some of the results they found. Researchers were faced with how to provide a uniform testing environment, bearing in mind that download speeds (for internet delivery) vary considerably. The solution described in the paper involved delivering laptops to schools and working with a test administrator. The assessment used simulated computer tasks – but users could only run one application at a time. Dr Ainley noted that in the "real world" IT users typically perform multiple concurrent tasks. He observed that the study leaders were able to define and measure ICT literacy, and are currently starting on the next round of the study (with some differences). The next study will involve server-based delivery rather than laptop delivery, and they believe it is possible to deliver with relatively low bandwidth. They are currently writing new modules around open source software – moving to freer distribution.

Discussion was aimed at the broader picture, and delegates agreed that it was very difficult to find a definition of "IT literacy" that was acceptable and agreed upon at an international level. Some veterans of the ICT Literacy component of PISA a few years ago reported it was very difficult to implement – especially the delivery of the study. The possibility of an OECD study on IT literacy in 2011 was mentioned. There was some discussion over the term "literacy", and whether this might refer to a "general" IT literacy or "critical" IT literacy. Others thought a more correct term was "competence", referring to the skills required to interact with the technology (which will continue to change over time). Dr Ainley reported that his team grew their operational definition from the international body of work. He considered that the defining IT literacy is intrinsically problematic and posed the following question: "is there such a thing as IT competence/literacy that is distinctive, measurable, and unidimensional?" Another way of posing this question is to ask whether "IT literacy" is an adjunct, expanding the domain of reading, science, etc to incorporate new technologies; or whether it is something different.

Dr Hegarty thanked the panel and mentioned that IEA owes it to the membership to think very carefully about what IEA should be doing with respect to further studies in ICT. He noted that if there is agreement that further studies should take place, the Secretariat will come with something more concrete to the General Assembly next year.

Session X 11.00-12.30
Summary of the small group discussions

Group 1: Ms Christiane Brusselmans-Dehairs (Belgium) summarized the discussion in the group, chaired by Dr John Ainley (Australia). Other participants represented Lithuania, Chinese Taipei, Sweden, Cyprus, France, and Czech Republic. They noted that an important constraint for IEA is competition with other international organizations, combined with the increasing pressure of assessments on educational systems. Importantly, if IEA doesn't move in a certain direction, it may be possible for other organizations to move into the space vacated by IEA. The group identified IEA assets as the NGO status and the comparative advantage to conduct research where they have the lead and where government organizations cannot. The group thought IEA could be more creative with the existing studies (e.g. more in-depth analyses), and move into innovative fields of research (e.g. future TEDS and possibility of measuring impact of teacher training), and possibly some longitudinal studies and regional analyses. The areas identified included vocational education, tertiary education, and lifelong learning. The group identified a significant change in the identity of IEA members: whereas once the organization consisted primarily of academics, members today increasingly represent Ministries. They noted that trend data from TIMSS and PIRLS is very interesting for policy makers, and suggested the history of IEA as pioneers in ICT studies represented a good argument to continue in this field. They thought training was well-developed and appreciated the initiatives taken so far by IEA; the group suggested that better visibility of IEA was required at the university level.

On the topic of dissemination, the group concluded that most countries do the same sorts of things, and summarized the most effective steps taken in their own countries: organize a national press conference on the same day as the international press conference; control (preparation and dissemination of) the press release and anticipate newspaper headlines; have the national report ready – particularly important when results are poor; invite key persons to the press release (i.e. don't do it in isolation); try to do secondary analyses when you anticipate problems – so you can answer policy questions; avoid leaks.

They noted it was critically important to keep the data alive and have impact with dissemination. Such activities include: contact different key actors and inform them; publish short articles in educational journals, carefully adapting language to the target audience; try to make data accessible on demand; organize seminars and teacher conferences; develop national thematic reports.

Group 2: Mr Jürgen Horschinegg acted as rapporteur for this group, chaired by Mr Michel Lanners and including GA representatives from Turkey, South Africa, Germany, the Philippines, and Denmark. The group suggested that research and policy making in education should aim at facilitating the best possible learning in the interest of the learners, and they wondered if this was reflected in the mission of IEA, or whether the organization should focus more on learners. They agreed that the uniqueness of IEA and its primary selling point were that it is a world leader in large-scale assessment and can offer a special combination of expertise in this area: this could be the starting point to promote the IEA brand/trademark. The group thought it would be useful to investigate and increase understanding of educational reform processes, including what happens within these processes, and evaluating the effect of processes. The group thought there could be more regional cooperation (as with the regional modules in ICCS), which could become a strategic component within studies, and which links with the discussion on dissemination. Also of interest was the question: "why do systems perform poorly?" The group acknowledged that IEA has helped develop "best practice" ideas; however, it was not clear what kinds of activities should be avoided. On discussion of trends, the group questioned whether the concept of trends is properly understood, or whether IEA was too heavily focused on collecting trend data at regular intervals at the expense of understanding existing data at a deeper level; they wondered whether IEA was "caught" in a trend cycle.

In a discussion of dissemination, the group discussed the division of labor, and suggested the role of IEA could be to provide high-quality data at an international level, whereas countries have to react in a brokerage role: their job is to recontextualize the data in terms of the national education system and national political debate. National centers need to address stakeholders directly (e.g. politicians, schools, teachers, students, parents, society, and media).

Group 3: Ms Anne-Berit Kavli reported back from this group, chaired by Dr Frederick Leung, and including representatives from England, Italy, Georgia, Botswana, Netherlands, and Malaysia. They considered that there were many different perspectives and approaches to studies on ICT, and the subject was interesting both on its own and in an integrated cross-curricular sense. It was thought that major differences between countries may mean that international comparisons might not be as interesting; instead, case studies might be more interesting. Of particular interest was the role of ICT in teacher training, in terms of how it affects learning methods or outcomes.

On future directions, the group noted that there are a large number of studies at an international level (including those run by other international actors), and this might already be enough: the challenge is to explain the differences. Thus instead of commencing new studies, the group suggested further development of existing studies. This might include: formulating better *a priori* research questions; refine questionnaires; develop possibility to correlate between studies; investigate curriculum as a subject of studies for more explanatory information; present analyses of clusters of countries in secondary analyses (all-country comparisons are sometimes not as helpful); further develop encyclopedias. Training needs differ between countries; however, many wanted more training in secondary analyses; correlation between variables; support in writing national reports; and case studies.

With respect to dissemination, the group posed the question "who wants the information?" and argued it was important to cater information according to that. In so doing, one can create "intelligent customers", who understand the basics and what it is (and is not) possible to conclude from the study. Other suggestions included secondary analyses to explain apparent results (e.g. with country or regional clusters, etc), and seminars for teachers, policy makers, and stakeholders. The group was also interested in short, focused summaries from the International Study Centre at the time of the press release. This could focus on the main questions, trends, and identify what is typical of countries that perform well, and those that perform poorly.

Group 4: Mr Adel Al-Sayed (Qatar) acted as rapporteur for this group, chaired by Dr Anu Toots (Estonia). Other participants represented Iceland, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and Scotland. The group reported that PISA and TIMSS each have their strengths, and the technical differences between the studies mean they can be interpreted from different points of view. Whilst the differences between the studies are clear to expert educators and researchers, they are not as clear to policy makers and decision makers.

In discussions of other studies the group noted that any future studies on technology in education (e.g. SITES follow-up) should focus on the relationship between ICT and learning and achievements.

With respect to dissemination, the group argued that it would be helpful for IEA to prepare some "practice notes" on dissemination. Suggestions included: prepare flash/one page about the result; develop short messages; write articles in the newspapers; hold thematic conferences; employ broker/ specialized independent team to analyze and write; clarify roles and responsibilities (i.e. who will do what?); open the channels between researchers and policy makers.

Group 5: This group was chaired by Dr Galina Kovalyeva (Russian Federation), and Dr Tom Loveless (United States) reported the results of the discussion. Other participants represented Canada, New Zealand, Latvia, Thailand, Spain, Indonesia, and Finland. The group expressed hope that the opportunities for TIMSS and PIRLS 2011 would be fully exploited, noting that the status of students in early grades (i.e. grade 4) is very important for interventions and subsequent achievement at secondary level. The convergence of TIMSS and PIRLS assessments in the same year opens opportunities to assess: the relationship between reading and mathematics/science achievement; the relative preparation of teachers at 4th grade; and the influence of family characteristics and cultural context on mathematics and reading achievement.

This group considered areas where IEA may cooperate with OECD, and identified electronic reading literacy as one such area, noting that the nature of literacy and text is changing. The second area was civics and citizenship; however, the group agreed it was premature to discuss this idea in depth before the current ICCS study was completed. Furthermore, regional modules might include social or cultural learning; or case studies that transcend geographical boundaries could be presented. Areas identified for future IEA studies include: possible expansion of TEDS to cover different subject areas, and differences between primary and secondary teacher preparation; second language education; a proposed 10-year cycle for TIMSS-A; case studies in pre-primary education; possible longitudinal studies beginning prior to grade four.

The discussion on dissemination focused on national reports, and the group suggested looking to the structure of international reports as starting point, and collecting and distributing models of how to prepare and present information in national reports (e.g. old press releases). It would be helpful to have a template or skeleton structure with flexible parts that could be adapted to individual country contexts. Preparation for data release includes anticipating media questions so concerns could be directed before they arise, for example preparing FAQs in advance to give to reporters. This information could also be included on the IEA website. It would also be helpful to have an abstract of the international report in advance so this could be used when preparing national reports.

Other business
As a response to questions and discussions since presentation of the Financial Report, Drs Hegarty and Wagemaker clarified two financial issues: first, that study invoices will be issued in two currencies (USD and EUR) for future studies to create a natural hedge against currency fluctuations; and secondly, that fees for future studies will be increased. Dr Wagemaker reminded participants that IEA has never previously indexed for inflation, and that the adjustments to the fee structure are intended to insulate against further rises for another ten years.

Next General Assembly
Professor Rainer Lehmann from Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany, invited participants to the next General Assembly, to be held October 6-8, 2008. Professor Lehmann noted that Humboldt celebrates its bicentennial in 2010, and Dr Hegarty reminded participants that the General Assembly in Berlin will mark with 50th anniversary of IEA.

Dr Hegarty expressed a formal farewell to members who were leaving their posts as General Assembly Representatives: Rainer Lehmann (Germany), Christiane Brusselmans-Dehairs (Belgium), and Constantinos Papanastasiou (Cyprus). He thanked Frederick Leung and Connie Leung for hosting the meeting in Hong Kong.

Dr Hegarty commented that it was a very successful meeting, and expressed his hopes that 2008 would be another productive year. He closed the meeting at 12.30pm