**Call for Institutional Partnership, Assessment Project Baseline, Bangladesh**

**Partnership/role title: Assessment Practitioners and Technical Partners**

**Location:** *Bangladesh*

**Apply by:** 22 November 2015

**Start date** 10 December 2015\*

**End date:** 31 March 2016

\* This start date refers to the point at which existing documentation and research is shared, we envisage the team doing desk research (UK based) from 10 December, and being ready to visit Bangladesh by early January 2016.

**Project description – about the project**

Education reform is currently underway in Bangladesh as demonstrated through the recent development of national education policy and revision of curriculum and textbooks across all subjects at both primary and secondary levels. The national education policy emphasises the learning of English for communicative purposes. The English curriculum for the secondary level has been developed to support and prepare the country’s younger generation for the competitive globalised world of 21st century. It aims that learners of secondary level will acquire communicative competence in all four skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing at pre intermediate level.

Although the curriculum emphasises developing the four skills of learners, assessment in both primary and secondary level is focused predominantly on reading and writing skills which has a severe ‘washback’ effect on teaching practices and often leads to a narrow focus on knowledge and skills necessary for learners to get through the exams rather than on developing their actual language skills as stipulated in the curriculum. Test anxiety among learners and test dominated lessons thus appear to be a common phenomenon in Bangladesh. The absence of speaking and listening assessment (and consequently the relative neglect of these skills in classroom practice) leads to inadequate competence in these skills for a large number of students.

Recently the Ministry of Education has clearly outlined the significance of speaking and listening skills as part of educational achievement by every learner. As part of the education reform process, for the first time in Bangladesh speaking and listening skills will be included in the assessment to ensure practice of all four skills in classroom teaching. The Education Ministry has instructed all secondary schools and main stream Madrasahs to give 20% weightage in the assessment of speaking and listening skills which will be added in summative assessment to determine the learners’ final grade. The assessment of these skills will be done through continuous assessment. This decision is applicable for all internal summative exams but not for public exams such as JSC, SSC and Dhakil (Madrasah) in secondary schools.

We believe that the single most important outcome for English teaching is to give as many pupils as possible the knowledge, skills and confidence in communicative English that they need for further study and employability. Therefore, the assessment of four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing will build a pathway for pupils to higher education and career readiness by the end of high school. It will also provide teachers with timely information to inform instruction and provide student support.

However, rigorous planning is required to establish the standards for listening and speaking in all grades and to make sure these assessments are administered and marked properly, sufficiently and consistently across all schools. Prior to the planning, some baseline information is needed to understand the way speaking and listening is taught currently and whether these skills are assessed informally and if so, how it is done and the existing knowledge.

Recently the British Council and the Ministry of Education, Bangladesh have agreed to conduct a joint study which will assist the development of a strategic roadmap based on evidence for speaking and listening assessment. A steering committee has been drawn up with representatives of Government and British Council which will advise and drive the process. There will also be a working group comprised of an institute expert in assessment and staff from British Council and English subject experts/trainers/ material writers from Ministry of Education who have a stake in the development of curriculum and assessment. The group will be responsible for designing and conducting the study and reporting to the steering committee.

**Role description – about the role**

The British Council is seeking an institutional partner to work closely with the working group to come with a comprehensive plan and actions including methodology, sampling, and instruments to be used for data collection, timetable for each step, data analysis and writing report of the proposed research.

The following are the specific objectives required to achieve through this study: (note these would be finalised in an inception workshop with British Council and the Ministry of Education, Bangladesh):

* This study will investigate the current practice of teaching speaking and listening skills and how these skills are integrated with other two skills: reading and writing in teaching. It will provide a basis to decide the types of improvement needed in pedagogical practice and what kind of professional development support teachers need to prepare students for speaking and listening assessment
* Though these two skills are not formally assessed currently, this study will also explore if there is any practice of assessing these skills in school level informally and how teachers provide feedback to pupils and communicate their progress to parents.
* As teachers will play a key role, it is important to know their current level of English and understanding and skills in the area of assessment. This baseline will obtain information to establish teacher practice in the above areas and make recommendations as to what kind of capacity building measures are required to empower teachers so that they can assess speaking and listening skills as per international norms and standard.
* There is a set of speaking and listening competences for each grade in the national curriculum which are expected to be achieved by learners. This study will critically analyse each competence and map them with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR). It will assist to set-up a national standard of speaking and listening in secondary schools and colleges with a reference of an international benchmark. Setting a National Standard will involve the sample testing of current levels of students listening and speaking competencies and linking this to a benchmark standard as reflected in the National Curriculum.
* It is important to understand parents’ and pupils’ perception regarding any change in assessment as they are the key stakeholders. This study will explore their views of the inclusion of speaking and listening assessment.

 **Outputs:**

* A detailed research methodology that will effectively ensure the data necessary for the study will be collected and analysed
* A final report of the study including clear action points

**Qualifications and experience required for experts put forward**

***Essential\****

* Post-graduate qualification in relevant subject (ELT/Linguistics and / or Education)
* Specialist qualification and / or significant experience of language assessment
* Specialist qualification and / or significant experience of educational research

The institution should also have experience of taking on such assignments as well as managing and deploying internal teams of experts.

***Desirable***

* Knowledge of the education sector in South Asia, with a focus on Bangladesh,

*\*Please note that experts may have some or all essential criteria, but the team should demonstrate expertise in all.*

**How to apply**

Interested institutions should send a short covering letter tailored to the above requirements, CVs of key experts, a short 2 page proposal of how they would undertake this assignment proposal and a detailed budget showing costs of staff time to Gaynor.Evans@britishcouncil.org by 5pm local time on 22 November 2015. (Bangladesh is currently BST +5).

Please note: we can only accept applications from educational institutions, not consortiums of experts.

*Unfortunately we will not be able to respond to every application and will only contact those who meet the required standards by the deadline for CV submission.*