

Reflections on the validity of using results from large-scale assessments at the school level



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Peter has been closely involved with the development and implementation of Australia's national assessment strategy since 1997. Previously Peter was a senior officer in the Western Australian Department of Education and Training where his roles included managing the state-wide testing program, i.e the Department's Evaluation Unit, and working with a team to develop new accountability policies for school self-assessment and reporting. He has also worked as a strategic planner in education as part of an Australian overseas aid program.

Prior to these appointments, Peter was a teacher of physics, chemistry and science in secondary schools and taught in teacher education programs at university.

Abstract

The recent decision by the Council of Australian Governments to develop a schools' reform plan that targets disadvantaged school communities includes an agenda for greater accountability, transparency and an outcomes focus.

The agenda for greater accountability and transparency has been part of the educational landscape in Australia and internationally for some time. It utilises, at least in part, performance indicators based on test scores for accountability measures at the school and system levels, as well as for measures of student outcomes.

With governments and education authorities around the world working to identify programs that are effective in assisting school communities improve standards, and to better direct the limited resources available to these programs, there is increased utilisation of the information from testing programs. This presentation considers some of the ways that results from large-scale testing programs may be used at the school and classroom levels— for example, school comparisons, school averages, value added and growth measures — and considers the validity of the inferences that may be drawn from the information.