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

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.