



March 16–18, 2011  
Educational Testing Service  
Chauncey Conference Center  
Princeton, NJ 08541  
United States

## INTERNATIONAL LARGE-SCALE ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE

### The Role of International Large-Scale Assessments in Educational Policy

## Purpose

The International Large-Scale Assessment Conference is designed to present and discuss multidisciplinary issues related to the use and implementation of international large-scale assessments. The conference is geared toward funders, policymakers, managers and technical staff of international large-scale assessment programs. The topic of the conference will be “The Role of Large-Scale Assessments in Educational Policy.”

The conference will feature guest speakers, each followed by a discussant. Each session will end with a period for questions from members of the audience.

After the conference, the speakers will submit written papers with their presentations. These will be compiled in a publication that will be made available in print as well as on the web. Presentations also will be videotaped and made available on the web shortly after the conference.

## Keynote Address

### Large-Scale Assessments as Change Agents

*Dr. Jo Ritzen, Chair, Empower European Universities – an NGO  
Former Minister of Education, Netherlands*

Politicians and other stakeholders in education have increasingly used large-scale assessments to promote better education outcomes. We document a number of cases, like the Dutch experiences with the publication of results per school and the experience with the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Several different transmission mechanisms can be distinguished from assessment to change, such as regulation or financial consequences (the United States, No Child Left Behind), competition (the Netherlands) or an appeal to ambition (as was presumably the case of Poland with PISA).

Parameters in conducting large-scale assessments — e.g., the periodicity, the nature of the assessments in terms of the relevance for the pupil for his/her education career — are considered for their impact on promoting better education outcomes.

## Paper Presentations

### Technologies in Large-Scale Assessments: New Directions, Challenges, and Opportunities

*Michal Beller, Director-General of RAMA, National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education, Israel*

The goals for schools today, in addition to student mastery in core subjects, include assisting students in becoming critical thinkers, problem solvers, good communicators, good collaborators, information and technology literate, flexible and adaptable, innovative and creative, globally competent and financially literate. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have the potential to enhance the assessment of these skills. This presentation will address the question of whether the computerized revolution of large-scale assessment will be merely a technological leap forward, or serve as a catalyst for a more profound pedagogical change in the way instruction and assessment will be conducted in the next era. Will it foster the integration of 21st-century competencies and expertise into all content areas? Will it facilitate the creation of new methodologies for a better use of technology in the service of learning?

*Discussant: Patrick Griffin, Executive Director, Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills Project, University of Melbourne*

### The Role of Assessing Cognitive Skills in International Growth and Development

*Eric A. Hanushek, Stanford University*

While most analyses of growth and development emphasize the central role of human capital, measurement issues have plagued both research and policy development. Specifically, attention to school attainment and enrollment rates appears to be misdirected. In contrast, recent work has shown that the measures of cognitive skills that can be derived from international assessments greatly improve the ability to explain differences in economic growth rates across countries. Moreover, improved cognitive skills appear to have dramatic impacts on the future economic well-being of a country, suggesting that policy actions should focus directly on school quality and other means of improving cognitive skills.

*Discussant: Guido Schwerdt, Program on Educational Policy and Governance (PEPG), Harvard University*

### The Utility and Need for Assessing Noncognitive Skills in Large-Scale Assessments

*Henry Levin, Teachers College at Columbia University and Stanford University (Emeritus)*

Most attention in large-scale assessments of educational progress and outcomes addresses cognitive measures of student proficiency. In part, this focus is due to the assumption that “skills” are cognitive in nature and have a high predictive value in terms of productivity. However, the predictive value of cognitive scores on worker productivity and earnings is more modest than commonly assumed. In fact, attempts to relate cognitive test scores from surveys to economic output, although meritorious, require substantial liberties in the interpretation of data. At the same time, there is considerable evidence that noncognitive attributes of individuals related to school experience are as important as — or even more important than — cognitive attributes in predicting both school outcomes and economic productivity. Noncognitive outcome measurement is more challenging to assess than cognitive dimensions because of its highly diverse dimensions and difficulties in sampling performance on these dimensions. This presentation will address the highly incomplete knowledge base on the potential importance of noncognitive aspects of students and schools, issues of measurement and assessment, and their predictive value on adult outcomes.

*Discussant: Andrew Sum, Northeastern University*

### The Contributions of International Large-Scale Assessments in Civic Engagement and Citizenship

*Judith Torney-Purta, University of Maryland*

Mathematic, scientific and literacy skills have taken center stage in the field of international large-scale assessments, and country rankings have become ubiquitous. However, three studies (since the 1970s) have addressed the topic of measuring civic engagement and citizenship and have examined patterns of student achievement in attitudes and skills as well as knowledge. Because of the complexity of preparation for citizenship and workplace readiness in different democratic systems, these civic education projects have had an innovative edge in both assessment development and in the analysis undertaken. Results from these studies have led to insights into political events, such as the difficulty of establishing civic education after a dictatorship, the rise of anti-immigrant parties, or changes in the political participation of young adults in Europe and the United States. These studies provide information about how students are able to get along with others in society, acquire norms, and participate via democratic means to implement change. In addition to considering civic studies in an international perspective, this paper will present results of secondary analysis of CIVED data to illustrate the utility of these studies, and will discuss analysis relevant for policy and for researchers in political science and psychology.

*Discussant: Erik Amna, Örebro University, Sweden*

## The Role of Large-Scale Assessments in Research on Educational Effectiveness and School Development

*Eckhard Klieme, German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF)*

Policymakers are mainly interested in large-scale assessments as indicators that monitor the functioning, productivity and equity of educational systems, while researchers tend to perceive large-scale assessments as a kind of multi-group (i.e., multi-country) educational effectiveness study. Aside from describing strengths and challenges with regard to student performance and the conditions of teaching and schooling in participating countries, researchers also want to understand why students achieve certain levels of performance. But because large-scale assessments provide only observational data, it is exceedingly difficult to draw causal inferences, such as concluding that a particular educational policy or practice has a direct or indirect impact on student performance. A productive interplay between large-scale assessments and effectiveness research may be established in several ways by implementing enhancements to the assessment design. Two examples of such enhancements will be presented and discussed: (1) a national large-scale assessment on language competencies in Germany reassessed students one year after the first large-scale assessment, allowing researchers to study the impact of school-level factors on classroom instruction and student growth; and (2) PISA/Germany reassessed schools nine years after their first participation in that large-scale assessment.

*Discussant: David Kaplan, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

## Summary Remarks

*Henry Braun, Boisi Professor of Education and Public Policy, Boston College*

## Conference Format

Each session consists of a 45-minute presentation by the invited speaker, followed by a 15-minute talk by the discussant. The last 30 minutes of each session will be dedicated to questions and discussion with members of the audience. Each session will have a moderator who will keep track of time and coordinate the question-and-answer period.

## Conference Schedule

### Wednesday, March 16, 2011

4:30 PM–6:00 PM	Registration
6:00 PM–8:00 PM	Reception and Keynote Address Large-Scale Assessments as Change Agents

### Thursday, March 17, 2011

8:45 AM–9:00 AM	Opening Remarks
9:00 AM–10:30 AM	Technologies in Large-Scale Assessments: New Directions, Challenges, and Opportunities
11:00 AM–12:30 PM	The Role of Assessing Cognitive Skills in International Growth and Development
12:30 PM–2:00 PM	Lunch
2:00 PM–3:30 PM	The Utility and Need for Assessing Noncognitive Skills in Large-Scale Assessments
4:00 PM–5:30 PM	The Contributions of International Large-Scale Studies in Civic Engagement and Citizenship
6:30 PM–8:30 PM	Dinner

### Friday, March 18, 2011

9:00 AM–10:30 AM	The Role of Large-Scale Assessments in Research on Educational Effectiveness and School Development
11:00 AM–12:30 PM	Summary Remarks
12:30 PM–2:00 PM	Lunch

## Further Information

For further information about the conference, contact  
Judy Mendez ([jmendez@ets.org](mailto:jmendez@ets.org)).

For hotel reservations, contact the Chauncey Conference Center  
at +1-609-921-3600. When making your reservation, use code  
“ILSA Conference.”

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