



OXFORD UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The rise and rise of testing and use of assessment data in Australia (Public seminar)

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Monday 17th November 2014, 17:00-18:30, Seminar room A

Convener: Professor Jo-Anne Baird, Educational Assessment

Abstract:

In 2008 testing became high stakes in Australia and since that time we have witnessed the rise of a major industry with the emergence of readily available practice tests for purchase, increased provision of online resources and burgeoning tutoring services focused on National Assessment Program – Literacy And Numeracy (NAPLAN) style tests. This presentation will critically examine the emergent issues for students, schools, parents and systems and will argue for a more balanced approach of formative and summative assessment with greater professional and system level understanding of the validity of the primary and secondary uses of assessment data. Empirical evidence is drawn from two recent studies of how assessment data is used by schools and systems for the purposes of accountability and improvement. One study is an Australian Research Council Linkage project entitled “Ethical Leadership: A collaborative investigation of equity-driven evidence-based school reform” and the other draws on the largest collection and analysis of research data on multiple facets of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in state schools. From the evidence of these studies it is concluded that the misuses of assessment data derive from interpretations that cannot be justified because there is too much inference, the interpretation is based on unreliable results or simplistic readings. Key emergent issues relate to the current evaluation system and whether the major assessment instruments actually assess what constituent communities, governments and the public deem to be of value. With the requirement for greater effectiveness, equity and quality in education to meet economic, social and political demands major tensions and pressures have arisen. These will be critically examined. Where there has been some success in the use of assessment data and methods that address some of these demands these are articulated and presented as a way forward in this particular high stakes context.

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