

# JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

Editor : Jandhyala B G Tilak

VOLUME XXX

NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2016

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KELLAGHAN, Thomas; Greaney, Vincent & Murray, Scott T. (2009): *Using the results of a National Assessment of Educational Achievement*, The World Bank, Washington, DC, ISBN: 978-0-8213-7929-5 (Paperback), Pages: 162, Price: not mentioned

On the day of budget presentation our Finance minister is the cynosure in India. So is the Education minister across the nation, on the day of announcing the results of 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> standard. High percentage of success is a matter of prestige for the minister and the ruling government. The media celebrate the day with photos of rank holders, laud for high performing schools, criticize for poor performance in institutions and various sensational stories related to educational performance of the state. What are we measuring through such school ending examinations? This question gains vital importance in the context of increasing evidences for strong correlation between acquisition of cognitive skills and aggregate income in the economy.

Our examination system is vulnerable to the criticism for encouraging mugging up by the students. Measuring the learning outcomes that make the student a member in the productive labour force is, often, beyond the scope of our examination system. This necessitates serious initiatives to consider the 'assessment for learning' as an important step towards quality education. While national level assessment of educational achievement is a gigantic and complicated task for many developed nations, expense and lack of technical background for the execution of such assessments is the hurdle for many developing nations. The common challenge, for both developed and developing countries, is the effective use of the results of national assessments for improving the quality of education. To translate the results of national educational assessment of educational achievement in to policies to prop up quality initiatives in education need critical and constructive approach from the stake holders. The book 'Using the results of National Assessment of Educational Achievement' authored by Kellaghan, Thomas; Greaney, Vincent & Murray, Scott T. offers great support in this effort.

The book under review is fifth in the series of books titled 'National Assessments of Educational Achievement' prepared by a team lead by Vincent Greaney. Focusing specifically upon reporting and using data obtained in national assessments for improving the quality of students' learning, the book provide a base for the personnel who craft such reports and policy makers who uses the results of such reports.

How does the educational assessment differ among nations? What are the criteria for fixing accountability for a national assessment? How do we ensure the quality of national level assessment? What are the types of assessment various countries follow? What are the reasons for the under use of national assessment? These are the questions addressed by the authors in the introductory chapter. Of course these are genuine questions that any reader might pause themselves while coming across National assessment of educational achievement. The argumentation that every educational assessment is unique as the context in which it is carried out determines its design, implementation and use is quite plausible.



Through assigning Power relations and political actors being the most decisive elements in determining the context of carrying out educational assessments, the book becomes a confluence of historical and contemporary reality. The book discusses the issue of accountability of educational assessment in a neutral manner. In continuation to the discussion about accountability the book presents a well balanced view on the quality of the assessment instrument and the under use of national assessment findings. Needless to say, one of the most useful parts of the book is its discussion about how assessment data can provide guidance to policy and decision-makers by elaborating on the actions designed to address underuse of the findings of national assessment of student achievements.

Preparing a cogent report is an important step in the best use of the findings of a national assessment. Being a primary source of information a report of this stature must describe the study in sufficient detail. At the same time it should not flood the reader with unfiltered information. The best use of such reports depends up on meticulous efforts in this direction from the part of the Personnel who work for the project. Still, such authentic reports are, often, beyond the access to critical mass in many nations. Potential users of assessment data are numerous and different. They might have different requirements. So the additional ways of reporting findings that are tailored to meet variety of needs is another important challenge faced by a report containing national educational assessment data. The book displays amazing proficiency in modeling itself as a manual in all these issues for those who engaged in national assessment of educational achievement.

Reformation is the responsibility of administrators and policy-makers is a cliché that needs to be dumped. While assigning the role of a 'ground' to national assessment report from which the seed of reformation sprouts out, the translation of findings of national assessment in to policy and action gains tremendous weightage. The systematic exploration made by the authors brings out two important issues in this regard. The first one is the complexity of decision making, the institutional capacity to absorb and use information, and the need to take account of a variety of vested interests in the process. The second one is the "evidence used to interpret the findings of an assessment and to reach a conclusion about the most appropriate ways to proceed in designing policies or interventions that will address problems identified in the assessment with the objective of improving student learning". Highlighting these two issues in a very comprehensive manner, the authors try to provide a frame work for the translation of findings in to policy and action following a national assessment.

Findings of the national assessment data will have a range of potential and actual uses in policy deliberations and educational management. The book highlights that such uses can mainly be classified into those that relate to providing information about (i) state of education and particularly about student achievement and; (ii) those addressing the deficiencies identified through the assessment. The classification thus made is followed by a detailed discussion which can provide great support for the policy and decision makers to implement the potential and actual uses of national educational assessments. In addition to the detailed discussion about the potential uses of the findings of national assessments, one chapter is exclusively focusing on how these findings can be "translated in to effective practices to ameliorate deficiencies in individual class rooms". The book suggests two strategies for this task; professional elevation of teachers through in-service and pre-service courses and crafting own policies by the schools depending up on the relevance of the findings to the specific context. Ten suggestions made by the authors, based on the



experiences of several nations that they discuss, to increase the influence of national assessment on teacher education and classroom practice is one of the most valuable contribution of the book.

Another interesting part of the book is about its observation on issues related to making the national assessments accessible to the public. 'Public' is a cross section of people with various attitude, level of understanding, interest etc. The need, perils and technical issues related to publishing national assessment reports for public accessibility is discussed with the support of examples from across the nations. In the concluding chapter, the authors share their concern, "perusal of the national assessments throughout the world, a reasonable conclusion would be that the level of achievements revealed in the assessments is not considered satisfactory". The alarming situation is addressed in the book through its suggestions of a list of task/checklist that can help to optimize the use of the findings of national educational assessments.

A well-crafted book. It models itself how systematically and scientifically content can be transacted to the readers. Every argument in the book is bolstered by empirical evidences based on the experiences of the nations across the world. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the book can be used as a manual for the national level assessment of educational achievement. The book addresses the interest of not only those who are engaged in national assessment of educational achievement and the policy makers, but also a wide range of population who are interested in the quality of education across the levels. The simple language and special care given to avoid technical terminologies makes reading hassle free for anyone who is concerned about the future of one's own nation.

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BELL, Sheena, Huebler, Friedrich, Motivans, Albert, Hattori, Hiroyuki, Waltham, Mark and Hawke, Angela (2015): *Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children*, UNICEF and UNESCO, Institute for Statistics, Canada, ISBN: 978-92-9189-161-0 (Paperback), Pages: 143.

Education is considered to be an essential ingredient for human development that leads to development of stronger societies. It has been mentioned in this report that there is consensus at every level that education matters, and because of this, many actions have already been taken at the global, regional and national level to provide educational opportunities to all children irrespective of their socio-economic background as envisaged by EFA goals and MDGs. These actions have also facilitated to reach those who were hitherto excluded from education system for ages. This has resulted in considerable decline in number and proportion of out of school children (dropped by 42%) during last fifteen years since the beginning of new millennium. Despite this decline, globally 58 million children of 6-11 years age are still found out of school, as reported by this recent report of UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for statistics "Broken Promise of Education for All". Based on the country level data, this report explores the magnitude of the problem of exclusion of children from formal schooling system, access to which is considered as a human right and because of this,