Welcome

This edition of Research eLert explores the concept of ‘value-added’ measures as a means of measuring how schools are progressing in improving student learning outcomes.

There is wide interest in the concept of ‘value-added’ measures with various models being adopted in countries such as the United Kingdom and United States. These international models demonstrate how value-added measures can be used as a tool for school improvement and accountability as well as means of informing policy development and reporting to parents.

While many educationalists are supportive of the principles underlying value-added approaches, there is less agreement on the scope and the methodologies employed.

I trust that this report will assist your understanding of this complex subject.

I look forward to your ideas and contributions to inform the development of a value-added approach in Victoria. Please direct your comments and feedback on the Research eLert to: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

Dr Dahle Suggett
Deputy Secretary
Office for Education Policy and Innovation

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Feature article

Value-added measures for school improvement

The aim of the feature article is to provide an overview of value-added approaches as a measure of school effectiveness. The article investigates value-added models applicable to the education and training system and seeks to determine if these models can be applied to the Victorian system. The ability to identify effective schools will inform school improvement and ultimately raise the learning outcomes of Victorian students.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2007

Related research

Australia

Accountability of teachers and schools: a value-added approach

There has been growing interest in Australia and internationally in the performance and accountability of teachers and schools. The research literature claims that student performance is influenced by three factors – the student’s background, the classroom and school context, and identified school policies and practices. This article examines the effects of these three factors on the science achievement of approximately 2,000 junior secondary students attending fifteen schools in Canberra. Research presented in this article tests the proposition that, ‘student outcomes are only partially influenced by the school where they are enrolled’, and also looks at the impact of significant factors such as student characteristics and context variables.


For further information contact the Office for Education Policy and Innovation at <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>

Real assessment issues for our schools

In this article, Keith McDougall, Principal of Broadmeadows Primary School, advocates the introduction of value-added assessment in Victoria’s schools that will provide teachers with data useful in developing a more refined approach to students at different developmental levels. According to McDougall, current practice in school performance assessment does not account for gains relative to prior achievement and can lead to inaccurate evaluation which may be overly negative in the case of disadvantaged students or overly positive in the case of advantaged students. He maintains that the current system does not recognise the wider range of ‘external influencing factors’ adversely affecting students’ achievements and proposes a ‘two-phase
accountability system’ for measuring different kinds of progress (absolute measure) and for determining internal differences (value-added measure).


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**Using data to support learning: ACER 2005 research conference proceedings**

The proceedings from the ACER Research Conference 2005 include keynote and concurrent papers on the use of data in learning from international and local researchers and practitioners. Topics covered over the three-day conference range from benchmarking and accountability to the selection of evidence and use of feedback data that make a difference to learning and teaching in primary and secondary classrooms. Professional development on the interpretation and the transformation of data into information that improves learning was addressed at the conference, as were skill development in online assessment and the utilisation of video data for classroom research.


**United Kingdom**

**School value added measures in England: a paper for the OECD project on the development of value-added models in education systems**

A current OECD project aims to develop international best practice in value-added measurement in education systems. This paper, written for the OECD, describes the methodology for the value-added models currently used in England’s schools for pupils of compulsory school age (age 4 to 16). It provides an ‘in-depth’ account of the methodologies used in both the original value-added scores and the new ‘contextualised’ value-added scores; the latter developed in 2004 after national consultation. A description of the main data sources, test data and school census, is included in the paper. Current uses of value-added measurement are outlined and include: performance tables; data for school improvement and inspections; selection of schools for particular initiatives; and monitoring policy initiatives.


**Value-added is of little value**

Gorard’s paper examines past and present attempts to measure the performance of schools in England. School performance indicators are published annually in England in league tables. This
has proved a controversial practice since its introduction in the early 1990s. Previously, the production of raw-score figures for school outcomes relied on the prior attainment and family background of the student. More recently there has been a move to add further information to the tables, in the form of student context such as the percentage with a special educational need and value-added figures based on student progress. The author contends that value-added scores do not accurately reflect the overall level of attainment in a school and are virtually independent of any ‘differential’ progress achieved by students. He challenges the use of value-added measures in formulating policy for school improvement and making recommendations for practice.


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**United States**

*Value-added, value lost? Value-added testing is enjoying increased popularity. But will this new approach help children learn better?*

The author critiques the value-added model of teacher effectiveness constructed by William Sanders. This model states that effective teachers can be identified through the increased results of their student’s test scores each year. Bracey argues that the multiple choice tests which Sanders’ model uses are neither adequate nor cost effective. The emphasis on test scores does not show the effective pedagogy responsible for the student achievement and in fact reduces the reliability of assessment to measure teacher effectiveness.

Bracey, G 2000, ‘Value added, value lost? Value-added testing is enjoying increased popularity. But will this new approach help children learn better?’, *Rethinking Schools Online*, vol. 15, no. 1.

http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/15_01/Val151.shtml

*The promise of value-added testing*

Crane examines how value-added testing can increase the validity of standardised testing in determining teacher effectiveness in US schools. The *No Child Left Behind Act* mandates that children in grades 3-8 be tested every year in reading and mathematics. The results from these tests determine not only the academic success of the student, but also the school, the district, the state and the nation. The value-added approach to testing determines whether a student’s test score has been improved by the effectiveness of their teacher. This article outlines the basics of the value-added approach, the perceived benefits of a value-added testing system, the issues surrounding value-added testing, the implementation of a value-added system, and the potential development of the approach.


http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_cdi.cfm?contentid=251035&knlgAreaID=110&subsecid=136
**Value-added models in education: theory and applications**

This edited volume, based on a conference of the same name held at the University of Maryland in 2004, contains revised presentations from that conference set out in ten chapters. Selected authors represent a range of experiences in value-added modelling. Topics include the development of theory, valid approaches to the applications of value-added models, findings arising from such applications in local school systems and from analyses of national and state data sets, and the application of value-added models to important questions in education policy.

http://www.jampress.org

**OECD**

**OECD background paper: the use of value-added models for school accountability**

Value-added analysis transforms longitudinal records of students’ test scores into indicators of comparative school effectiveness. Appealing as this process may be, the author advises caution. Considering the nature of school systems and education data, statistical analysis cannot determine the contribution that a school makes to student academic progress with complete accuracy. The particular contributions of school practice and school context are even harder to determine. Estimates produced by value-added models (VAMS), though, do contain useful information. They can be used as a criterion in comparative studies of different education policies or in school improvement initiatives. The methodology of VAMS may be refined for use in particular contexts. VAMS can be thoughtfully used to inform policy development and directly support school improvement efforts.


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**Upcoming events**

Below is a list of upcoming conferences which may be of interest. For a comprehensive list of conferences, workshops and events, check out the Education Network Australia site at:


**Curriculum Corporation 14th Annual Conference: ‘21st Century curriculum’**
12-13 November 2007
Sydney, New South Wales
International Council of Associations for Science Education (ICASE): ‘Science education for all’
12-13 November 2007
Pattaya, Thailand
http://www.icaseonline.net/ICASEASianSymposium2007.htm

Association for Qualitative Research (AQR) Conference: ‘Qualitative research and the professions’
13-14 November 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
http://www.latrobe.edu.au/aqr/

14-16 November 2007
Sunshine Coast, Queensland
http://videolinq.tafe.net/learningtechnologies2007/

University of Melbourne: ‘Our schools…our future’
15 November 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
http://melbourneinstitute.com/conf/school/default.html

Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC), University of Melbourne,
Annual International Conference: ‘ Honouring the child, honouring equity’
15-17 November 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

mystery - digital storytelling in the classroom: a VELS workshop for teachers
19 November
Melbourne, Victoria
http://www.acmi.net.au/A554C28946174605B0BFFFC34642B6A7.aspx

Victorian Information Technology Teachers Association: ‘Rethinking education: You say you want a revolution?’
19-21 November 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

Science Teachers’ Association of Victoria (STAVCON) Annual Conference
22-23 November 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

University of Sydney: Dialogues and differences in arts education conference 2007
23-24 November 2007
Sydney, NSW

Leading learning through the school library: a guided inquiry approach
23 November 2007
Brisbane, QLD

Early Childhood Organisation: Reading aloud: the what, the when the why, the how
24 November 2007
Adelaide, South Australia

Australian Association for Research in Education 2007 Research Conference: ‘Research impacts: Proving or improving?’
25-29 November 2007
Fremantle, Western Australia
Career Education Association of Victoria (CEAV) 2007 Biennial Conference
2-4 December 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

2007 Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Research Conference: ‘Growing up in Australia’
3-4 December 2007
Melbourne, Victoria

International e-Learning Symposium, 2007, RMIT Globalism Institute
9-11 December 2007
Melbourne, Victoria
http://ls7.cgpublisher.com/welcome.html

ICSEI Conference 2008: ‘Educative partnerships for schooling improvement and effectiveness’
6-9 January 2008
Auckland, New Zealand
http://www.icsei08.org.nz/

The Annual Australian Research in Early Childhood Education Conference (ARECE)
22-23 January 2008
Frankston, Victoria
http://www.education.monash.edu.au/research/arece/

Australian Library and Information Association: Beyond the hype 2008: Web 2.0
1-2 February 2008
Brisbane, QLD
http://beyondthehype.ning.com/

5-7 February 2008
Melbourne, Victoria

Teachers as Researchers database

As part of its commitment to share knowledge and build capacity, the Department’s Education Policy and Research Division produces a range of high quality publications. The publication Teachers as Researchers is a database that has been developed to support teachers to build their research knowledge, skills and practice; and it comprises a range essential readings, key research organisations, and recommended publications.

To access the database, click on the following link:

Contributions & feedback

- Do you have or know of a research paper that you think would be worth considering for inclusion in Research eLert?
- Are you currently undertaking education research that you would like to share with our readers?
Is there a particular topic or theme you would like Research eLert to cover?

Do you have information on new publications, upcoming events or interesting websites that would be of interest to education researchers and practitioners?

Would you like to provide feedback – including suggestions to improve Research eLert?

If you answered yes to any of the above – then we’d love to hear from you. Please forward your information, suggestions or comments to: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

Reflections & action

Below are some questions to assist in reflective practice and to explore future actions.

- Which value-added measurement research papers would be worth tabling for professional reading in my workplace? How will I facilitate this?
- What are we currently doing that supports current research on value-added measurement? Do we have strategies in place that would be worth sharing via the Research eLert?
- What new knowledge have I gained in the area of value-added measurement? How can this learning be used to inform and support school/organisational transformation?
- What research information would I like to share with others? How will I do this?

Next edition

The next edition of Research eLert will feature a report on Teaching and Learning a Language Other Than English (LOTE) in Victorian Schools which aims to provide a succinct overview of LOTE as part of the essential learning of students. It does so from a range of perspectives, beginning with a brief summary of policy developments in language teaching in Victoria and nationally. Links will be drawn with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards Discipline-based Learning strand which includes the LOTE domain, comprising the dimensions of ‘communicating in a language other than English’ and ‘intercultural knowledge and language awareness’.

We are keen to include information on how schools and other learning organisations are using research to inform and guide their practice and would like to include some of this work in the Research eLert. If you are interested, please contact the Research Branch at: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.
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The Extra is part of the Office for Education Policy and Innovation Knowledge Sharing initiative. The Extra provides information on the Department’s research forums, and keeps you up-to-date with the latest news about education research. The latest Extra supplements Issue No. 11 of Research eLert which explored the concept of student voice. The Extra is available at: <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/nws/researcheLertextra-studentvoice.pdf>.