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# REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

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Issue 2

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## ***In This Issue***

*In this issue of the Review of Assessment Activities the emphasis is on who has responsibility for carrying out a country's assessment activities. It also focuses on methods used to distribute assessment results as well as on who is informed of those results.*

*The section dealing with "New Developments" describes the efforts of countries to examine a new and interesting type of measure – value added by schools. Also, the assessment activities for this quarter are presented.*

*A "thank you" is owed to all countries participating in the newsletter, which, of course, depends upon your willingness to provide information for our "press."*

*Responses to the first newsletter were positive and encouraging. Countries seem to appreciate this opportunity for an increased global understanding of different assessment practices.*

*As always, if you have any ideas for future editions, please let us know. We welcome all thoughts, suggestions, corrections, and contributions.*

## ***Responsibilities for Assessment Activities***

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We asked countries to inform us about who has responsibility for their assessment activities — including the design of instrumentation, the collection and analysis of the data, and reports on findings.

Not surprisingly, your answers describe a diverse world. A few countries report that assessment activities are the responsibility of a national-level unit, such as a Ministry (or Department) of Education or a National Institute for Education. Other countries report that contractors, non-governmental research units (such as university-based research institutes), or subnational units (e.g., provinces, inspectors, schools) conduct assessment activities. Details are presented below, and a summary is shown in Table 1.

In **Belgium**, instrumentation is designed by the Ministry of Education, in conjunction with inspectors and a research team. Data collection is handled by the inspectors, schools, and teachers. Data analysis is conducted by the research team; while findings are reported by the research team and the inspectors.

**Canada**, reflecting its federal structure, involves a consortium of provinces and territories in designing the instrumentation. Data are then collected by each of the participating provinces and territories. However, only one jurisdiction (i.e., province or territory) is responsible for the preparation and cleanup of the data files, with a second jurisdiction processing and analyzing the data. Once data analysis is complete, the information and tables are open for discussion by all jurisdictions. Reports are drafted after discussions have been completed.

**England's** School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and its contractors collaboratively design the instrumentation under the Department for Education and Employment's (DFEE) authority. Data are collected at three key stages — for 7, 11, and 14 year olds. Data are collected on 7 year olds by Local Education Authorities. Separately, data are collected on 11 and 14 year olds by Examination Boards. Each organization collates the data to the school level on behalf of the DFEE. Analysis is performed by the DFEE's Analytical Service

Branch, and reporting is handled by its School Curriculum Branch.

In **Finland**, achievement assessments have been initiated by the Institute for Educational Research (IER) at the University of Jyväskylä. The IER consults with a National Committee when planning the study, but conducts all data collection, analysis, and reporting itself. Current national assessment activities consist of an agreement between the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education (NBE), which allows the NBE to contract out the studies — the results of which are reported back to the NBE and the Ministry of Education.

In the **Netherlands**, the National Institute for Educational Measurement (Cito) is responsible for conducting all assessment activities. On the other hand, the **New Zealand** Ministry of Education's programs for National Monitoring and Transition Point Assessment are carried out by contractors.

**Spain's** instrumentation design is a collaborative process between the National Institute for Quality and Evaluation (INCE), a Ministry of Education and Science unit, and the educational administrations of the Autonomous Communities (which constitute the Spanish state). Data collection responsibilities are then contracted out to firms specializing in educational surveys, with data analysis and reporting performed at two levels: the aggregate data are

<b>Table 1: Responsibility for Assessment Activities</b>				
<b>Country</b>	<b>Instrumentation Design</b>	<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>Reporting</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Research team</li> <li>• Inspectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspectors</li> <li>• Schools and teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspectors</li> <li>• Research team</li> </ul>
<b>Canada</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consortium of provinces and territories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating provinces and territories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two provinces or territories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All provinces or territories</li> </ul>
<b>England</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Curriculum Assessment Authority, under the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE)</li> <li>• Contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local education authorities</li> <li>• Examination Boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analytical Services Branch of DFEE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Curriculum Branch of DFEE</li> </ul>
<b>Finland</b>	<p><i>For past achievement assessments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The University of Jyväskylä's Institute for Educational Research (IER), in consultation with a National Committee.</li> </ul> <p><i>For recent national assessments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Board of Education and Ministry of Education contract the study.</li> </ul>			
<b>Netherlands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Institute for Educational Measurement</li> </ul>			
<b>New Zealand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contractors</li> </ul>			
<b>Spain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Institute for Quality and Evaluation (INCE)</li> <li>• Ministry of Education science unit</li> <li>• Autonomous Communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INCE (with experts)</li> <li>• Autonomous Communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INCE (with experts)</li> <li>• Autonomous Communities</li> </ul>
<b>Turkey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Research and Development Department</li> <li>• Research Planning and Coordination Commission</li> <li>• Board of Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Planning and Coordination Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Research and Development Department</li> <li>• Research Planning and Coordination Commission</li> <li>• Board of Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Educational Research and Development Department</li> <li>• Research Planning and Coordination Commission</li> <li>• Board of Education</li> </ul>
<b>United States</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Assessment Governing Board (establishes framework)</li> <li>• Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (drafts request for proposal)</li> <li>• Contractors (development)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Education's NCES</li> </ul>

analyzed and reported by INCE (with the advice of data analysis experts), and the Autonomous Communities analyze and report their own data.

In **Turkey**, three entities are involved in instrumentation design, analysis, and reporting — the Educational Research and Development Department, the Research Planning and Coordination Commission, and the Board of Education. However, only the Research Planning and Coordination Commission has responsibility for collecting data.

**The United States** has a National Assessment Governing Board that develops the framework for assessments. The Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) then contracts test development and data collecting to private agencies. The reporting of findings is then carried out by NCES and other Department of Education officials.

### ***Methods for Reporting Information***

We asked countries to tell us more about their reporting practice, finding that most countries rely on two main methods — through writing and through other types of announcements to the public — for communicating results. Such reporting practices seem to vary widely, depending upon intended

audiences. Table 2 summarizes different methods countries use to report findings and the audiences to whom they distribute those findings.

The following countries use written reports to communicate findings:

- Belgium
- Canada
- England
- Finland
- the Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Spain
- the United States

**The Netherlands** focuses on producing technical or statistical reports that are intended for the educational research community. Also, **England, New Zealand, and the United States** produce non-technical summary reports intended for more general audiences. **Canada, Finland, Spain, and the Netherlands** produce both types of reports. The **United States** also produces statistical almanacs on CD-ROM.

Another main reporting technique is press conferences. The following countries rely on press releases or press conferences to report results:

- Finland
- the Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Turkey
- the United States

<b>Table 2: Methods of Reporting and Distributing Assessment Results</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>Methods of Reporting</b>	<b>Distributed To</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teachers</li> </ul>
<b>Canada</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written reports (public and technical)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general public</li> <li>• provincial and territorial ministries of education</li> <li>• education research communities</li> </ul>
<b>England</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ministers</li> <li>• the press</li> <li>• parents</li> <li>• schools</li> <li>• the general public</li> </ul>
<b>Finland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written reports (scientific)</li> <li>• press conferences and press releases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the National Board of Education</li> <li>• press</li> <li>• schools</li> </ul>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• statistical reports</li> <li>• press releases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general public</li> <li>• the education press</li> </ul>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written report</li> <li>• press conferences</li> <li>• policy briefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the general public</li> </ul>
<b>Spain (planned)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written reports (technical and general)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educational administrators and school headmasters</li> <li>• teachers</li> <li>• parents</li> <li>• the general public</li> </ul>
<b>Turkey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• press releases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the general public</li> </ul>
<b>United States</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written reports (technical and general)</li> <li>• press release and briefings</li> <li>• statistical almanacs on CD-ROM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policy makers</li> <li>• education community</li> <li>• general public</li> </ul>

Written reports and press releases are used to inform specific audiences about assessment results. Countries, therefore, disseminate the results to a variety of audiences — including the general public, policy makers, researchers, schools, teachers, and parents. The most common audience is the general public, to which the following countries disseminate their findings:

- England
- Finland
- the Netherlands

- New Zealand
- Spain
- Turkey
- the United States

Dissemination usually is accomplished through press conferences and by making written reports available to the public. **Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States** specifically try to keep the education community aware of their results by inviting that community to press conferences.

**England** and the **United States** brief policy makers on the results, as does **Canada**, which briefs the ministries of education in each province and territory, and **Finland**, which provides results to its National Board of Education. Several countries provide results to schools and teachers, including **Belgium, England, Finland, and Spain**. **England** and **Spain** also provide results to parents.

### ***New Developments: “Value Added Measures”***

We asked countries (because of a great suggestion from England) to tell us about any developments they had underway related to a relatively new type of measure that examines the value added by schools — which can be used to assess students and schools. In general, countries expressed an interest in finding out more about this new measure. Although most countries are not currently using such value-added measures, countries expressed that the measures hold promise for future efforts, and they reported discussions of the possibility of exploring such measures in the near future.

**England** reported that it is committed to the publication of value-added measures, if clear and reliable measures can be established. Meanwhile, Newcastle

University has recently been commissioned by the School Curriculum Assessment Authority to develop measures, and an interim report is due in September of 1995.

**Finland** has begun a major national effort to study the effectiveness of education as measured by the value added of schooling. The Academy of Finland (in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor, and the National Board of Education) has allocated 17.1 million FIM (around US\$ 4 million) to this study, which has been further divided into 16 sub-studies in several universities. The studies will include all levels and ages of education, economic and labor market aspects, teacher education, and general cultural and theoretical issues.

In **Spain**, data analysts are being trained in the statistical procedures that measure added value by teachers, schools, and educational administrators.

### ***Assessment Activities: This Quarter***

Many important assessment activities are underway this fall. The details are presented below and summarized in Table 3.

The following test construction, development, and revision activities are being conducted:

- **Belgium** is constructing tests for the mother tongue and mathematics for grade three;

- **New Zealand** is currently developing the next cycle of the National Education Monitoring project;
- **Spain** is conducting test construction and development of the Vocational Education Study. The final phase of design for the Preschool Education Feasibility Study will be completed; and
- **Turkey** is conducting a research project on the educational needs for the year 2000.

Coordination, preparation, and consensus building activities are occurring as follows:

- In **Canada**, a consortium of provinces and territories is being established to begin the review of the mathematics assessment for the Second Cycle of the SAIP Mathematics assessment, to be administered in 1997;
- **England's** School Curriculum Assessment Authority is preparing the test questions and performing other preparations for its 1996 assessment;
- The **Netherlands** is preparing assessments in the arts, English, and traffic behavior; and
- **Spain** is building consensus, constructing tests, and sampling for the pilot of the Vocational Training Study, as

well as building consensus and designing questionnaires for the Compulsory Secondary Education Study.

**Canada** is analyzing data from its pilot of field trials in science. Also, **New Zealand** is piloting its Transition Point Assessment.

Data collection is scheduled as follows:

- **Canada** is collecting data for field trials in science;
- The **Netherlands** is collecting data on knowledge of the world;
- **New Zealand** is conducting its first round of assessment on representative samples of 8 and 12 year olds as part of the on-going National Education Monitoring Project;
- **Spain** is collecting data for the Family-Education System Relationships Feasibility Study; and
- The **United States'** sampling for state and national assessment is underway and data regarding long-term trends is being collected.

The following activities related to scoring and analyzing data will be carried out:

- **England's** Department for Education and Employment is analyzing the 1995 National Curriculum Assessment results of 7, 11, and 14 year olds in English, mathematics, and science;
- **Finland** is working on its analyses of a "quick" national assessment

that was carried out in April of 1995. This study includes achievement measures on mathematics, mother tongue reading and English as a foreign language (reading and listening comprehension) in the basic comprehensive school. Questionnaire sections included background questions dealing with school characteristics, saving operations during the recession, quality of student life, and student self-image;

- The **Netherlands** is processing data on language and physical education; and
- **Spain** is analyzing data for the Primary Education Study and the Climate Feasibility Study will be conducted.

Report writing is occurring as follows:

- **Canada** is releasing the Technical Report for the Reading and Writing Assessment 1994;
- **England's** Department for Education and Employment is publishing the 1995 National Curriculum Assessment results of 7, 11, and 14 year olds in English, mathematics, and science;
- **Finland** is reporting the results to the National Board of Education regarding its recent national assessment;

- The **Netherlands** is writing reports related to its arithmetic and music assessments;
- **Spain** is producing the first raw report of the Primary Education Study and a report will be produced for the Physical Education Feasibility Study; and
- The **United States** is writing the reports on its 1994 results.

Assessment Activities	Countries
Test construction, development and revision	Belgium, New Zealand, Spain, and Turkey
Coordination, preparation, and consensus building	Canada, England, the Netherlands, and Spain
Piloting	Canada and New Zealand
Data collection	Austria, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, and the United States
Scoring and analyzing	England, Finland, Netherlands, and Spain
Reporting results	Canada, England, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United States

## Reports

With your cooperation, future issues will include basic information on upcoming assessment reports. Network A members could then request that information from a country's designated contact. Please let us know if you would like to make reports available to Network members so that we may highlight those reports in future issues.

## ***Anecdotes***

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In the United States, a caller left a message requesting that he or she be faxed everything regarding the National Assessment of Educational Progress, unaware, no doubt, that the request was for over 100,000 pages of information! We are pleased to report that the U.S. Department of Education's fax machine is currently sending page 65,841! (Just kidding.)

As always, we welcome memorable, and quite possibly humorous, stories about your own experiences in conducting assessments. Please send brief anecdotes to us for possible publication.

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