Value-Added: The Emperor with No Clothes

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The trend to use value-added models to rate teachers and principals in New York is psychometrically indefensible.

New York State, among many others, is racing toward the mandated implementation of a teacher and principal evaluation system based in part on something called a value-added model (VAM). In New York, the results of VAM are going to be used to make high-Unfortunately, these models are goi

teachers and principals in New York State's hastily passed and sloppily implemented Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system.

For me [2] the former state psychometrician of Louisiana who was hired to analyze an equally flawed value-added-type model at the beginning of the "school reform" movement more than two decades ago [2] what I'm now witnessing in New York and the rest of the United States is deeply disturbing. A grave injustice is being foisted from the top down on educators who are caught up in the most recent crush of reform initiatives.

What Are Value-Added Models [2] and Do They Work?

Value-added models are mathematically and conceptually complex, which alone argues against their use for evaluation. This complexity is why people can be easily mystified and intimidated by them. The basic idea is that these models are able to statistically determine (or control for) the influence of multiple factors on some outcome measure, like student achievement on standardized tests.

The proposed VAM for New York State's performance review system will supposedly control for variables, inc

But buyer beware: The validity and reliability of value-added models for rating the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and schools have been roundly rejected by almost the entire psychometric and education research community (Newton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, & Thomas, 2010).

Before finishing this story, let me explain what value-added models can ² and can't ² do. In the aggregate, these models can indeed help us better understand how student, classroom, and school characteristics influence education outcomes. However ² and this is crucial ² when one tries to predict an *individual*

factors as the percentage of a teacher's students who live in poverty, are classified with a disability, and are English language learners. But these factors put together ² along with

there's enough reasoned resistance to this rush to implement a misguided policy, the tide might turn.

New York has always been a leader in education. It should continue the highest traditions of the Empire State and point out the obvious ² that using value-added models to rate teachers and principals is folly. This emperor clearly has no clothes.

References

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