

Public Service Accountability: A Comparative Perspective

Chapter 8¹

Education, Testing, and Validity: A Nordic Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

In reacting to Visscher's chapter (In Chatterji, 2013, pp. 101–135), this chapter aims to describe and explain similarities and differences in schooling and assessment systems in different countries, with a specific focus on Denmark, Netherlands, and the United States. Through a comparative and culture-based view of education systems and values in these countries, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a more nuanced picture of their systems for assessing school outcomes. Questions explored include: What is valued, what is measured, and what counts? Which validity considerations should matter in evaluating assessments and education systems?

8.1. Purpose

To react to Visscher's chapter (In Chatterji, 2013, pp. 101–135), this chapter describes and explains similarities and differences in schooling and assessment systems in Denmark and the Netherlands, with specific reference to systems in the United States. Through a comparative and culture-based view of education systems and values in these countries, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a more nuanced picture of systems for assessing school outcomes.

8.2. Comparing Educational Systems and Systems for Assessment

8.2.1. Denmark and the Netherlands: National Similarities and Education Systems

8.2.1.1. National profiles Denmark and the Netherlands have much in common. They are geographically small, densely populated coastal countries (40,000 km²) with a very flat topography (no mountains). Both have a long tradition of cultivating their soils. In their cities, water plays an important transportation role (through harbors, and canals), and bicycles are another main means of transportation. They are both ancient seafaring nations and both have a previous status as colonial powers. In both countries, the transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy happened peacefully, with cooperation between the monarch and politicians. The transition happened independently but simultaneously in both nations between 1848 and 1849. Their languages are related, both originating from the Germanic family (old Dutch can be read by many Danes). Both countries are known for liberalism, tolerance, and

¹ Chatterji, M. (2013), (ed), Validity and Test Use: An International Dialogue on Educational Assessment, Accountability and Equity, Copyright © 2013 by Emerald Group Publishing Limited. All rights of reproduction in any form reserved. ISBN: 978-1-78190-946-1 <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/products/books/notable/page.htm?id=9781781909461>

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