Editorial

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In the UK and North America, schools are on summer holiday. In most jurisdictions, this means that leaders, teachers, and students are out of school on a well-deserved break before gearing up for the start of the 2014–15 academic year. However, even while most schools remain quiet, the continuous public and media-fuelled discussion about assessment, the quality of schools, and international comparisons drones on. The topics of debate range from the redesign of student assessments underway in England to the ongoing discussions about the design and implications of different teacher and student assessment strategies across North America. It is difficult, even during our supposed school holiday, to escape the topic of assessment.

My partner is a London-based primary school teacher and consequently is at home for the UK summer holiday break. This brief 5-week interval affords me rare opportunities to travel for work without completely disrupting our family rhythms. Seizing the occasion, this week I accepted the invitation to co-teach a graduate organizational learning and development (OLD) course at the University of Malaya, Malaysia, with Professor Alma Harris and Dr Michelle Jones. The cohort of participants is excellent, and it has been refreshing to get reacquainted with OLD theory and explore its implications for schools and school systems.

On the course, as we have woven our way through historical and current OLD theory and research, the role of data, assessment, and evidence has provided a constant thread. Throughout the discussions, the emphasis has been less on the outcomes of assessment and evaluation and more on the potential for individual and collective learning from the evidence. We have also spent considerable time reflecting on policies, structures, and practices that enhance evidence in support of learning and innovation. This infrastructure has also been a recurring theme in our examination of national and local education systems that are often recognized as being “successful.” This has been an interesting physical and intellectual context within which to read and reflect on the papers published in this issue of EAEA. Each paper, from a different vantage point, explores a pivotal assessment issue and raises important questions for future research and practice.

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In the lead paper, Fulmer and Polikoff raise and address the critical, and oft ignored, issue of alignment between assessments, standards, and curriculum in *Tests of alignment among assessment, standards, and instruction using generalized linear model regression*. The authors skillfully apply and compare the strategies for examining and determining the statistical significance of different methods for measuring mis/alignment. Based on comparison between generalized linear model (GLM) results and ordinary least squares (OLS), the authors conclude that the GLM method allows more informative analysis of differences between source documents than alignment indices alone, including determination of whether marginal discrepancies are statistically significant or not.

Montecinos, Madrid, Fernández, and Ahumada present the second paper, *A goal orientation analysis of teachers' motivations to participate in the school self-assessment processes of a quality assurance system in Chile*. The evidence in the paper emerges from a study of goal orientation among teachers engaged in the assessment phase of the School Management Quality Assurance System. Focus-group interview analysis identified three school-level patterns of participation associated with distinct goal orientations: a learning orientation, a performance-approach orientation, and a performance-avoidance orientation. The paper examines the school-level differences to highlight teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of their school's culture in association with the adoption of the different goal orientations.

In the third paper, Suurtamm and Koch discuss *Navigating dilemmas in transforming assessment practices: Experiences of mathematics teachers in Ontario, Canada*. The authors report on a study of 42 mathematics teachers working to understand and implement new classroom-based assessment practices. Using an analytic framework adapted from Windschitl (2002), the paper identifies teacher dilemmas and establishes the need for coherent communication of messaging and ongoing commitment to developing teachers' professional judgment and assessment practice.

In their paper, *Parents' and teachers' perceptions of standards-based and traditional report cards*, Swan, Guskey, and Jung move the discussion back to several mid-sized American school districts, where they examine 115 parents' and 338 teachers' perceptions of standards-based and traditional report cards. The authors outline how parents overwhelmingly preferred the standards-based report. While teachers were also positive about the standards-based reports, they were less so than parents.

Noonan, Gaumer Erickson, McCall, Frey, and Zheng author the final paper, *Evaluating change in interagency collaboration of a state-level interagency education team: A social network approach within a utilization-focused framework*. The paper examines the collaborative strength of a state-level interagency team over 3 years. The authors outline how the team members themselves then used the results of the social network analysis to drive their own collaboration and network over time. The paper provides a very helpful framework for the assessment of collaboration as well as the cyclical utilization of social network analysis to improve practice and reach.

While the papers in this issue come from different countries and explore educational assessment and evaluation from different vantage points, they share a fundamental commitment. At the core of each paper, as with our OLD course, is a belief that reflection upon and scrutiny of the practice and outcomes of assessment is integral. Each paper included in this issue makes an important contribution to the discussion and, I believe, will be welcome reading for those of you on summer break—or not.