

Challenges in national assessment: An experience of large scale testing from Pakistan

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Pakistan is a country which is struggling to institutionalize national assessment system. Most of the assessment activities in the past have been project driven and could not sustained after projects timeline. In pursuance of National Education Policy (1998-2010), National Education Assessment System (NEAS) with its associated provincial centers were established as a priority programme to institutionalize students' assessment as a permanent feature of education system. These centers started functioning in 2002 and so far conducted two national assessments. In 2006, NEAS conducted its 2nd national assessment at grade 4 in four selected subjects i.e. Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Language. Test, as a major tool, was administered in the sampled institutions through out the country by Test Administrators (TAs).

This paper highlights the major challenges faced during large scale testing, in a developing country like Pakistan. The data was collected through a questionnaire, provided to the test administrators, monitors during test administration in the largest province, Punjab and interviews of the coordinator of NEAS and provincial coordinator of Punjab. The major challenges emerged as security of the test material, political pressure by the teacher unions, non cooperation by the district Governments, test scheduling, and lack of trained staff, clarity between national assessment and high stake examinations and fear of being assessed by teachers, students and school administration. The paper concludes with some suggestions for NEAS to over come the highlighted challenges.