

**Large scale assessments studies:  
Supporting formative assessment in South African schools**

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Since the mid-nineties, a number of large-scale assessment studies (LSAS) have been conducted in South Africa. However, limited information is available on the most cost-effective methodologies and designs, analysis techniques or reporting formats that yield the most useful information for policy makers and teachers to enhance learning in the classroom. In this paper, I review a number of LSAS conducted in South Africa to determine whether, and how, these studies have been applied to support formative assessment in schools.

The paper begins with a definition of large-scale assessment studies and a review of the different assessment functions. Next, I discuss assessment practices in South Africa focussing on current policies and practices. This is followed by an analysis of the trends in the use of LSAS and examples of different formats for reporting information that could be used by teachers to improve learning. This paper concludes with some of the challenges that need to be addressed for facilitating the use of LSAS to support the formative function of assessment.