

## **A quick tour of 25 years of assessment research**

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Assessment is a phenomenon that raises a lot of emotions, from students as well as teachers. Many debates have been conducted in practice as well as in research about the value or nonsense of assessing students' learning outcomes.

In practice, these debates are fuelled by the perspective that assessment is about standardized tests, often large-scale, measuring rote memorisation, evoking high levels of test anxiety etc. Illustrative for the ongoing debate is the growing opt-out movement in the US in which parents, students and teachers are refusing to take or administer high-stakes tests. Although in Europe the tone of the debate might be milder, assessment is high on the list of discussion topics of parents, teachers, program directors and governmental bodies. In educational research, this debate is reflected in the movement from testing research to assessment research as well as in the development of concepts as Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL). From the 1990's on, there is a growing body of literature on the key features of educational assessment, compared to testing and on Assessment for Learning as opposed to Assessment of Learning. Worldwide, researchers are not only developing theoretical frameworks of AfL. They are also validating measuring instruments and collecting evidence of the impact of AfL practices and conditions for AfL to realize effects.

From the year 2000 on, researchers have been developing assessment frameworks in which AfL and AoL are balanced. For example, the Learning Integrated Assessment system (Birenbaum et al, 2006) aims to serve the dual purpose of AoL and AfL.

Parallel to the aforementioned developments, many educational researchers have been addressing modes of assessment that fit the movement from testing to assessment. Well-studied examples of these modes of assessment are: performance-based assessment, portfolio assessment, self and peer assessment. This growing interest is reflected in the publication of review studies on each of these modes of assessment.

At the same time, concerns have been raised about how to define quality of the so-called new modes of assessment and about the appropriateness of traditional psychometric quality criteria.

In this personal quick tour of 25 years of assessment research, I will elaborate on the aforementioned developments and illustrate them with results from review studies as well as illustrative single research studies. Finally, I will propose some avenues for future research.