SYMPOSIUM ON THE REPORTS OF THE GORDON COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF ASSESSMENT IN EDUCATION

A Vision for the Future

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Testing Today

- Test taking as a *performance*
  - Divorced from authentic pursuits
  - Relies on tasks unlike real-world activities
  - Motivation is contrived
  - Context is unnatural
    - Help seeking strictly controlled
    - Peer interaction forbidden
    - Resources constrained
Testing Today

- Design Constraints
  - Comparability and fairness
  - Efficiency
  - Emphasis on factual knowledge
  - Demand for objectivity
Comparability and Fairness

- It seems fair to standardize the testing situation and treat everyone the same
  - Meaning of score inheres in the test, not the examinee’s interaction with the test
  - Standardization is thought to make score comparisons unproblematical
    - Objectivity may trump validity
Efficiency

- Every assessment must produce some kind of “scorable record” of examinee performance
- Multiple-choice tests rely on a “bubble sheet” (separate answer document) to capture student responses
  - This is efficient and objective, but limiting
Focus on Factual Knowledge

- Popular view of schooling holds that schools should:
  - Focus on “the Basics”
    - The “Three Rs”
    - Factual information

- Most such learning outcomes appear amenable to multiple-choice testing
Objectivity

- Testing is …
  - Scientific
  - Precise
  - Objective
    - Test responses are supposed to be unambiguously right or wrong
A Vision for Testing in the Future

Assessment will be

- A natural part of ongoing classroom activities
- Informative about solution processes as well as outcomes
- Informative about group work as well as individual work
Comparability and Fairness

- Assessment will be
  - Criterion-referenced
  - Responsive to individual interests and talents
    - But nonetheless comparable
Efficiency

Assessment will be

- Based on new forms of data derived from human digital interaction
- Based on much more extensive, fine-grained samples of student performance
- Reliant on sophisticated information processing
Schooling Outcomes

- Assessment will be
  - Designed to inform important learning outcomes, including many now largely neglected
  - Focused on accessing and using information instead of memorization
  - Designed to show what students can accomplish in “smart workplaces” with an expanded repertoire of knowledge representations
Beyond Objectivity

Assessment will be

- Responsive to individual differences
  - Showing what students can do, each on their own terms
- Grounded in rigorous evidentiary argument linking observations to inferences and actions
  - But aiming for inferences and actions informed by context

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The Gordon Commission has pointed the way toward a bold new future
Thank you