Analysis of International Assessments of Student Achievement

ITSF 5035

Assignment 3

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To: Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China

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Subject: More areas in China should participate in PISA

**ABSTRACT**

Participating in international large-scale assessment (ILSA) has become increasingly popular in education. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) program has received numerous attention in the field, and wide topics have been addressed in the literature in the last decades, including equity and quality education, globalization, and education policy. Whether to expand the participating areas in China is also an important topic to discuss. This policy demo will fully discuss the advantages and disadvantages to let more areas participate in the PISA in China with detailed analysis. To pursue more entrusting results for policymakers, more participants can guarantee the sampling methods to get a more reliable outcome, since China has a large population, also it should not limit to the capital area or financial center which probably will affect the objective analysis. Even though the participating cost can not be ignored, there must be some ways to solve the problem. Thus, I recommend that more areas in China should participate in the PISA.

**BACKGROUND**

International large-scale assessment (ILSA) in education, such as the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TINSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are getting more attention from educational practitioners, policymakers, and the public around the world. There are a lot of benefits to consider to participate in ILSA to find out how educational infrastructures would get a better auxiliary for policymaking, also related industries with measurable social outcomes across different schools and countries. The ILSA results will feature prominently in discussions about the comparative quality of educational jurisdictions and have had important policy implications across and within multiple countries (Johansson, 2016)

The sampling designs for ILSAs will give a guideline for further analyses and are featured by collections of data from large samples of students who will do the standardized assessments and give a comprehensive response about their school experiences, including some school policies implementations, teachers report on aspects of the classroom and parents report on home support for learning, which could infer more important and hidden information of the education system.

Today, ILSA research in education is a flourishing field that has experienced significant growth in recent decades (Addey et al., 2017; Kamens & McNeely, 20910). The numbers of participating entities have increased considerably from 12 in the IEA’s Firest International Mathematics Study (FIMS) in 1964 up to 61 in PIRLS 2016, 64 in TIMSS 2015, and 73 in PISA 2015. At present, about 70% of the countries in the world are estimated to participate in ILSAs (Lietz, Cresswell, Rust, & Adams, 2017, p. 1). Major objectives of ILSAs, include improving education quality and equity, as well as serving the increasing demand worldwide for greater accountability for the investments made in educational provision. In general, ILSAs share common objectives that either explicitly or implicitly have some elements: provision of high-quality data to improve policymakers’ understanding of key school-based and non-school-based factors influencing teaching and learning; Provision of high-quality data as a resource for identifying areas of concern and action and for preparing and evaluating educational reforms; Development and improvement of the capacity of educational systems to engage in national strategies for educational monitoring and improvement (Wagemaker, 2014, pp.13)

The Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China certainly acknowledges the benefits to participate in the ILSA and you have joined the PISA since 2009. However, the actual situation is only Shanghai has participated in PISA since 2009, then the government expands the participation with more cities, like Beijing, Jiangsu, and Guangdong in PISA 2015, and Zhejiang in PISA2018 and 2022 according to the OECD website.

**SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

I recommend that more areas in China should participate in ILSAs for the following reasons.

The People’s Republic of China has over 1.4 billion population, and the outcomes of selected areas participating in ILSAs can not represent the whole country's education system and standards. As I mentioned above, only Shanghai, Beijing, Zhejiang, Jiangsu participated in PISA till 2022. These cities or provinces are either capital or global financial hub. For example, Shanghai with a population of 24.87 million only takes up 1.8% of the whole population. Researchers or policymakers like the Ministry of Education can not make national education policy by the results. So more areas mean more people will participate in the assessments and the result would show relatively reliable to use. As we can see, ILSAs have made important progress in other methodological areas, such as sampling. Policymakers could evaluate large and fair data with advanced sampling methods to make more rational education policies.

Another reason is the current participating areas are selected purposely, which can not represent the education level of the whole country. People who live in Shanghai and Beijing are like people who live in New York and Washington. Most of them have a good salary and living standards with decent education resources, like qualified teachers, more resources from the communities or society they can use. Then how about other places like the west part of China or low-income areas? Can they have the same or similar education resources for students? For example, the education evaluation standards are different between Columbus Ohio and New York City. In New York City, there are tons of investing facilities that some of the employees would directly teach in class and share the real business cases for students to analyze, while in Ohio, there are limited resources to use. In this case, it will definitely hinder the educational progress. So, to get a more accurate performance, more areas should participate in PISA.

Last but not least, the PISA results will support education system improvement. With a large population, the education system is super complex and hard to implement thoroughly. The OECD strives to identify what policies and practices appear to be functional in countries and economies that are recording high performance or show evidence of significant improvement over time on PISA. It reports those findings and supports countries and economies that wish to investigate and explore the extent to which they would benefit from similar programmes. There is no “one size fits all” education model for countries and economies. It is not possible to cut and paste one area’s education system into another area. So to enhance the overall education quality, more areas still should participate in PISA spontaneously.

**COUNTER-ARGUMENTS**

Even though, more areas participating in ILSAs will cost more obviously, around a million of USD. The assessments are expensive for sure, however, we should see the potential benefits it can return! There are more complex and profound influence and reward to get from ILSAs. Firstly, governments can get a gist of the present education system’s performance, then it can also bring up the international reputations to attract more students and investments around the world. We all agree that knowledge is the key to a country’s development, which it could offer more resources and ideas. It could select an operable method to make the results more accurate, for example, they can sample the participating areas then sample the schools in a decent statistical manner to solve the cost problems.

Regardless of the high level that ILSAs have achieved, there is still room to improve. The ILSAs themselves are not perfect to represent all perspectives of an education system.

**CONCLUSION**

The policy demo provides a broad overview of the ILSA and lets more areas participate in the PISA in China based on the three major objective rationales. There are several positive features that point to good standing in the educational system by participating. Based on China's current situation, seldom selected cities cannot represent the whole education system in China. Like OECD aware, there is no “one size fits all” education model for other areas. To earn a reliable international reputation. I strongly recommend that China’s government should let more cities participate in the PISA in the future.

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