

Preface

This volume consists of the papers presented at the International Large-Scale Assessment conference held at Educational Testing Service (ETS) in March 2011. The conference was designed to present and discuss multidisciplinary issues related to the use and implementation of international large-scale assessments. It was geared towards funders, policymakers, managers, and technical staff of international large-scale assessment programs. The conference covered the following topics: large-scale assessments as change agents; technologies in large-scale assessments; the role of assessing cognitive skills in international growth and development; the utility and need for assessing noncognitive skills in large-scale assessments; the contributions of international large-scale studies in civic engagement and citizenship; and the role of large-scale assessments in research on educational effectiveness and school development.

The different perspectives brought together in this volume reflect the changing landscape of these surveys both in terms of the widening group of researchers and policymakers interested in these data and the issues that should and could be addressed. Among these new directions is a surge in the use of large-scale assessment data in the field of economics as well as an increased interest in how these assessments can inform and the use of technology in education and assessment. In addition, research in civics and citizenship studies as well as investigations focusing on motivation, interest, and self concept indicate great interest in the data collected in international comparisons of education and skills.

Bringing together expert authors to produce such a volume would not have been possible without the generous support of ETS. ETS provided funding for the speakers and sustenance for all conference participants. Also contributing to the success of the conference was the set of invited experts who agreed to provide reflection and discussion of the invited presentations. We would like to thank Esther Care, from Assessment & Teaching of 21st Century Skills Project, Melbourne, Australia; Guido Schwerdt, from the Program on Educational Policy and Governance, Harvard University, United States; Erik Amnå, Professor of Political Science, Örebro University, Sweden; Patrick Kyllonen, from ETS; and David Kaplan, Professor of Quantitative Methods, University of Wisconsin-Madison. These discussants helped

to sharpen and shape the questions and answers and, finally, to shape the final version of the chapters presented in this volume.

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