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Value-added assessment in higher education : a comparison of two methods

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**Abstract**

Evaluation of the effectiveness of higher education has received unprecedented attention from stakeholders at many levels. The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) is one of the initiatives to evaluate institutional core educational outcomes (e.g., critical thinking, written communication) using standardized tests. As promising as the VSA method is for calculating a valueadded score and allowing results to be comparable across institutions, it has a few potential methodological limitations. This study proposed an alternative way of value-added computation which takes advantage of multilevel models and considers important institution-level variables. The institutional value-added ranking was significantly different for some of the institutions (i.e., from being ranked at the bottom to performing better than 50% of the institutions) between these two methods, which may lead to substantially different consequences for those institutions, should the results be considered for accountability purposes. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Liu, Ou Lydia, E-Mail: ILiu@ets.org