

Prof Margaret Wu
The Age (Letters)
1 Oct 09

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/letters/prejudice-not-faith/2009/09/27/1253989823564.html?page=2>

Professor Margaret Wu, a statistician with the ACER, and Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne, wrote to The Age:

Like with Like

Professor Barry McGaw asked if it is fair for parents not to be told how badly a school is doing. As a statistician, I ask: "Is it fair to accuse a school or a teacher of not doing their job when they are?"

NAPLAN results have large error margins. This can be shown statistically. But common sense will tell you that if we ever change the VCE to be based only on a couple of tests with 40 questions, there will be an outcry on the lack of reliability in the results. So how can NAPLAN results be used to assess school and teacher performance, when the performance of students is not measured well?

When schools are grouped into "like" groups, we need even more precision in the measures to detect differences between schools. It will be easy to demonstrate the difference between a high-profile private school and a low socio-economic government school, but it will be more difficult to determine significant differences between two high-profile private schools.

NAPLAN results just do not provide the precision to do that. ***Linking low student performance to school performance is at best a conjecture.***

Prof Margaret Wu

See: www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/cgi-bin/public/staff_profile.cgi?id=4182

Qualifications

B.Sc.(Hons.), Grad. Dip. (Computer Science), M.Ed., Dip.Ed., Ph.D

Teaching Areas

Test and Scale Development
Quantitative Methods
Large-scale Survey Research

Research

Margaret's main area of research is in the development of item response modelling and its applications, particularly in the context of large-scale assessments such as international and national assessments. Margaret also has a keen interest in computer delivered assessments and the use of technology in educational assessment.