The new school progress measures continue to ignore the very large socioeconomic and demographic differences between schools which also drive results.
Key findings

• Design and interpretation differences between CVA, EP and P8 lead to fundamentally different school rankings with many schools moving up or down the national tables by hundreds or even thousands of places with the introduction of each new measure.

• The move from CVA to EP greatly inflated the school league table positions of schools with higher prior-attaining pupils, especially grammar schools, while the move from EP to P8 pulls these schools substantially back down the league tables.

• That some schools misused CVA to set differential GCSE target grades for pupils with different socioeconomic and ethnic status reflects the perverse incentives that arise when too much emphasis is placed on test scores when holding schools to account.

• EP suffered from fundamental design flaws including being biased in favour of high prior attaining pupils, perversely incentivising schools to focus on pupils making borderline progress, setting otherwise identical pupils different GCSE target grades, ignoring the substantial uncertainty in predicting school performances.

• An important explanation for the school differences in P8 will be differences in the social and demographic composition of schools' intakes; P8, like EP, ignores all pupil background characteristics other than their prior attainment.

Further information


This work was funded by an ESRC Future Research Leaders grant (ES/K000950/1). Further details can be found on the grant website: http://bit.ly/2jEuA0y

Contact the researchers

Dr George Leckie, Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol: g.leckie@bristol.ac.uk

Professor Harvey Goldstein, Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol: h.goldstein@bristol.ac.uk