

AutoMarque takes the guesswork out of testing

Despite the Rudd Government having spent over half a billion dollars to improve literacy and numeracy, with non discernable difference to the results of the schools taking part (Courier Mail, 1 Aug 12, p. 23), analysis of the 2015 PISA results has revealed that Australia has lost its position in the top 10 countries in 2003 to be just inside the top 20 countries in 2012 (Hays & Challinor, 2015).

What's happening here? Alec Young, developer of AutoMarque ascribes part of the cause of the decline in Australia's competitiveness on the world stage to much the same reason that has caused Finland to lose its former PISA ranking status... more pupil-led methods and less structured schooling environments.

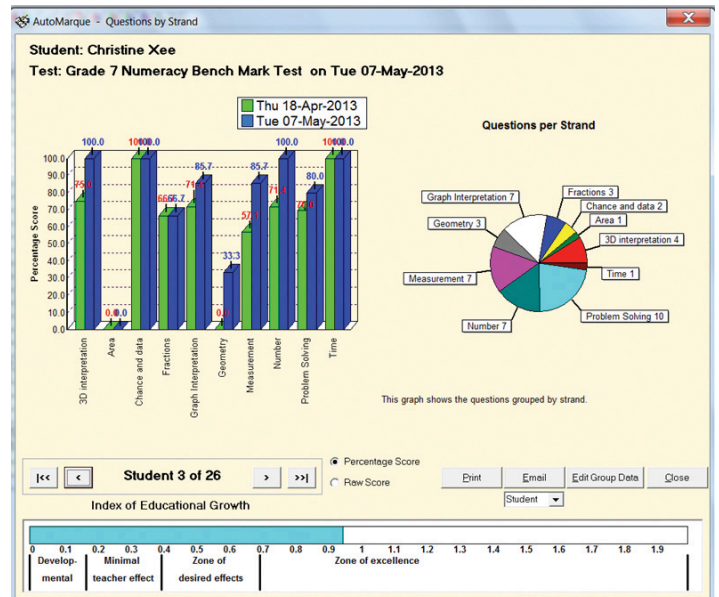
"The strongest policy lesson is the danger of throwing out authority in schools, and especially getting rid of knowledge-based, teacher-dominated instruction," Young says.

The solution, he says, lies in consistently testing students' knowledge and understanding of a topic. "Unless the progress of students is measured, there remains a large gap between reality and observation."

The concept of relying on a bold score per test for each student as an indicator of progress is as crude a process today as it was more than a century ago. According to Hattie, (Hattie, 2009, p. 241) students already know about forty per cent of the material the teacher is planning to teach. That being the case, it is essential that teachers can quickly identify the student knowledge base and adapt their pedagogy accordingly and AutoMarque is ideal for this, Young says.

By using the school's office photocopier and high level OCR software to scan test papers, AutoMarque reduces test marking from a time consuming chore to as little as two minutes for a class of up to 30 and generates detailed and accurate reports that:

- Assess the reliability of each test
- Analyse the quality of multiple choice questions
- Scrutinise the strands of learning in each test to facilitate deeper understanding of students learning needs
- Disclose each student's 'Index of Educational Growth' so that students are compared with themselves rather than their peers
- Calculate the effect size of the teaching as a powerful concept



Pre-test/post-test analysis feedback displays the student's name, the two dates of assessment, how each strand was handled on both occasions, the proportions of the strands that made up the test and the 'Index of the student's educational growth'.

- Investigate the segments of understanding in a multiple choice test to give teachers insights as to the nature of a student's mistakes rather than holding to the centuries old concept, "You were wrong!"
- Assess practical work, multiple choice questions and written work.

AutoMarque has received top marks from primary and secondary schools in all states with one deputy principal commenting that her students "...were learning at twice the rate of the national average, and at twice the usual depth through the regular use of pre-test and post-test analysis."

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