

## **The Predictive Value of Test Scores and Teacher Recommendation**

Lex Borghans, Ron Diris and Trudie Schils

**Abstract:** The past decades have seen a strong increase in the use of achievement tests to measure the ability and potential of students. While test scores provide objective and comparable measures of students' abilities, they are also criticized for focusing too much on specific aspects of ability, thereby neglecting other elements that can be relevant for future success. As an alternative, general assessments of students by teachers might provide a broader picture about student potential. The aim of this paper is to compare the predictive power of test scores with that of the tracking advice of primary school teachers, for both short and long run educational and labour market outcomes. Our main finding is that the teacher advice is a much stronger predictor of short-run success such as placement in a high track, but its relative predictive power versus test scores decreases for later outcomes. Additional analysis suggests that the strong short-term predictive power of the teacher advice is not due to it being a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', and indicates that the two different measures are weighted differently towards skills that are important in the short run versus skills that are important in the long run.