



The 6th ITC Conference 2008

The impact of testing on people and society: Enhancing the value of test use

14-16th July 2008, Liverpool, UK

Main Goal of the Conference:

To bring together researchers, educators, psychologists, policy experts, testing specialists and those who use tests on a regular basis to discuss the impact of testing on people and society. The conference will address methodological, technical, professional and ethical issues in relation to policy and practice issues within testing, which includes the value and utility of testing, policy and practice issues in testing, advances in testing, the availability and use of tests in small and developing countries and the impact of tests and testing on people and society. The conference will consist of invited lectures, workshops, symposia, paper sessions and posters and will cover the areas of work, health, leisure and educational contexts.

Areas and issues to be addressed at the conference:

When considering the interface between testing and the public, there are three ‘touch points’ where the public interact with testing: a) the test taker responds to the test itself; b) various stakeholders use or respond to the score report or feedback from the test; c) various government bodies and public or private sector organisations use testing as an instrument of policy. The areas addressed at the conference will consider these touch points.

Four general themes run across the specific issues addressed below, and are expected to be considered in some way:

1. Validity issues and practices: *enhancing the validity (including face validity) and utility of tests*
2. Scientific advances in testing: *the use of different methodological approaches to enhance test development and validity*
3. The emerging role of computers and the Internet: *the use of computer-based and Internet-delivered tests and the impact on the public.*
4. Consequences of test use and test-taker rights: *social policy contracts between professionals and the public.*

A. Test-taker perceptions of testing. The test-takers' understanding and evaluation of what the testing procedure is designed to measure has a potential impact on the quality of their responses. If the test is perceived as trivial, irrelevant or simply too embarrassing to answer, test-takers may provide poor quality responses. Applicant reactions to testing in recruitment or selection, and the research on fairness and perceived justice in relation to tests and testing have become important issues for research and practice. In addition, consideration of the perceptions of tests in educational contexts (from students, teachers and parents) as well as in clinical/health contexts is an important topic for the testing community. This theme aims to examine the individual psychological factors (anxiety, experience, motivation etc.) and processes (fairness perceptions etc.) of the test-taker as well as the potential negative psychological effects on the test-taker and other stakeholders as a result of the decisions made from testing. What is the impact of test-taker perceptions on the test outcomes and how can perceptions impact on effective test design and use?

B. Cheating and deception by test takers and others involved in the testing process. This theme will consider intentional and unintentional distortion, cheating and security issues in testing. Why, in what forms and how often does cheating occur? What is the impact on testing? What technological and scientific ways are there to control or highlight cheating? How secure is test-taker data? Are there ways to manage data protection and confidentiality when data is transferred across countries? In addition, is it possible to measure the effects of unintentional forms of deception, such as self-deceptive enhancement and denial? Are some tests and constructs more distortion-proof than others? What do we know about deception by other stakeholders such as test developers and test vendors? Is there evidence for publication bias concerning psychometric test information?

C. Score reporting and feedback. Institutions and individuals use test data to answer questions, solve problems, inform, describe and so on. Key to this is the need for a better understanding of how people use test score reports and what they gain from them. This theme will consider some of the psychological, ethical, practical and policy issues in relation to test feedback and score reporting. One topic could examine issues raised in relation to ensuring that interpretations from test scores are appropriate and valid (whether paper or computer-generated reports). Is there evidence of poor practice in score reporting? How do we ensure reports are valid representations of the test scores and what approaches are there to measuring this? Are the correct norms used in interpreting the test scores? How do we ensure consistency in interpretations across test-users and countries? Another topic could consider how the results from tests are communicated to relevant stakeholders in the testing process. Specifically, what different media (e.g. computer) are used to provide feedback and what is the impact of such approaches; on what level and to whom is the feedback delivered; and what are issues surrounding providing feedback across countries and languages (e.g. data protection, translating reports and construct equivalence of the text across countries).

D. Advances in testing. This theme focus on advances in testing with respect to modelling of data (IRT, DIF, SEM), the use computers and the Internet, new item types,

new scoring approaches, and the redefinition and/or establishment of new constructs and the like. In particular, evidence for the psychometric soundness of these advances should be considered as the assessment field moves forward in its attempt to increase test score validity and overall fairness in testing practices. For example, the public expects to see increasingly sophisticated use of motion and graphics; there is pressure to make tests shorter and shorter and more intrinsically interesting; and the use of the Internet affords commercial as well as technical advantages. However, are such trends compatible with psychometric quality?

E. Testing as an instrument of policy at state, national and international level. This is a general theme dealing with practical, ethical, professional and methodological issues with testing at a state, national and international level. It captures state or Government policy with regards to testing and the impact on test-takers and society in general. Issues within large scale international testing (such as translation and adaptation, perceptions of individuals from different countries, country-specific policies); promoting testing in new and developing countries and differences in the types of tests used in different countries could also be considered. How can the testing community ensure that testing on an international stage is to a level that impacts positively on test-takers and the wider community?

F. Ethical testing and test-taker rights. This theme will consider testing-related standards and guidelines and how they impact on the quality of tests and testing internationally. Are standards and guidelines useful and effective? Can such standards ever be international? Could there be international standards for certification of tests or of test users? What do test users, test takers and other relevant stakeholders need to know in relation to good practice and how can the testing community disseminate this information? In addition to standards, what are the rights and responsibilities of test takers? This aspect could include privacy concerns (e.g. communication of information), the selection of tests (e.g. is it correct to use a clinical test for selection? Have we the right to assess the risk of future pathology when we select an employee?), and the right to know the test results. Overall, this theme focuses on how the testing community can discuss with test users, test-takers and the wider public about what is being done to facilitate the use of psychometrically sound tests, to promote ethical testing, to enhance test-taker rights and to promote the value and utility of tests as an aid to decision making in work, health, leisure and educational contexts.

G. Training the new test designers, developers, and test users. One way to enhance the validity and utility of tests is to ensure that those individuals developing, publishing and using tests are trained to an appropriate level. However, there is concern over the reduction in the numbers of qualified psychometricians to help advance testing research, teaching and practice. This theme considers the future of testing with a focus on policies that may help to identify, train and provide the test experts of the future. What will be the skills needed by the various stakeholders in the testing process in the future? With the surge of interest in new technology and advanced methodological approaches (e.g., IRT, SEM, DIF) in the development, adaptation, and validation of assessment scales, as well as in the analysis and interpretation of their score data, will test users and experts need to

be up-skilled? If so, how can this be done and what could be taught? How are testing and measurement courses taught internationally and what policies are in place for the future?

If you wish to register your interest in the conference or have suggestions for topics that you feel would fit within the conference's themes please contact Iain Coyne at the address below. A web site will be developed and a further announcement and details of registration and submission procedures will be advertised in the near future.

In the meantime, please put the dates in your diary.

ITC website: www.intestcom.org

ITC Council 2008 Conference organising committee:
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