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Test and tester qualifications. Part 1

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ITC Bulletin

Test and Tester Qualifications, Part 1: Introduction

Who may purchase psychological tests? Who may use tests in selection procedures? How can we safeguard the public and psychology as a profession against test abuse? These questions are important to all those who are involved in professional testing in various settings such as education, counseling, guidance, and occupational selection. The interest in these questions is probably as old as professional test use itself. The ITC owes indeed its existence, among other things, to the efforts of an international group of psychologists who were concerned about improper test use in their countries, as we could read in the article by Cardinet in a recent ITC Bulletin.

Professional organizations of psychologists in several countries have recently developed or revised their rules for proper test use. The present and next ITC Bulletin will be devoted to a description of recent developments in test and tester qualifications in various countries. The present issue contains two contributions: Bartram describes the approach adopted by the British Psychological Society and Simner gives an overview of the initiatives of the Canadian Psychological Association.

The British Psychological Society has developed an elaborated set of test and tester qualifications. Test qualifications are based on reviews in which technical information is described about the test. The reviews also contain an evaluation specifying the instrument's strengths and weaknesses with respect to its use in a practical context such as occupational assessment. The approach to tester qualifications is "competence-oriented." This means that adequate test use is stimulated by a formalized system of test evaluations and education of test users. A certification system has been developed indicating who may use which tests. Two levels are distin-

guished "Level A" (tests of ability and aptitude) and "Level B" (personality assessment).

The emphasis on both test and tester qualifications is also present in the approach adopted by the Canadian Psychological Association. Simner describes the safeguards that are currently used and points to their problems. For example, there is now a three-tier system of test qualifications. However, the training needs (to administer the test and to interpret and report its results in an appropriate way) were not well specified and various commercial testing firms have developed their own training standards. One test may have different training standards in different firms. It is proposed in the present recommendations to replace or supplement this system with a purchaser classification system, that specifies whether an individual is qualified to purchase the test. First-time users should be required to complete a test user qualification statement.

There are distinct differences between the British and Canadian approach. For example, the British Psychological Association has a more elaborated system of tester qualifications. However, the commonalities of both approaches are more pronounced. Both Associations start from the premise that there are many psychological tests that have a good reliability and validity and that improper use of these instruments will do a disservice to the public and eventually, also to psychology as a profession. In the long run the interests of the public, test publishers, and test administrators are served best by appropriate test use. It is hoped that the present ITC Bulletin will stimulate the discussion on test and tester qualifications.

Fons van de Vijver, Editor