Effects of Standardized Testing on Students

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Standardized Testing

State-approved standardized tests are not a new idea in government-funded schools. A standardized test is a type of assessment that requires all test takers to answer the same questions, or a selection of questions from a common question bank, in the same way and that is scored in a “standard” or consistent manner, making it possible to compare the relative performance of individuals. For nearly two decades, scores from statewide tests in English and mathematics have been used to determine which schools are doing a good job of educating students and which are “failing.” Educators in some states are now being labelled proficient or deficient based on their students’ scores. Ideally, state standardized tests would measure a student’s yearly achievement—what the student learned during one year at school. Unfortunately, no test can perfectly measure something so complex. For example, does Allie score well in English because she has an excellent teacher or because she has always been an enthusiastic reader? Does Adam score poorly in English because he has an ineffective teacher, a learning disability, or a difficult home life? State-administered tests are not sufficiently reliable to be used as the sole basis for teacher and school accountability or for student retention and class placement.

Realm Of High-Stakes Consistent Assessment:

According to a study conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools, an average student takes approximately 112 mandated standardized tests between pre-kindergarten and 12th grade; by contrast, many countries that outperform the United States on international assessments test students only three times throughout their school careers. Many members of the public find this excessive, while teacher morale can decline when educators worry that people who do not understand their work will make judgments about their professional competence. Standardized tests have long been used as one measure of a student’s progress in core subjects. However, state funding now often depends on test outcomes.

This shift accelerated with President Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act, which required states to categorize schools based on test outcomes as a condition of receiving federal funding. With the introduction of No Child Left Behind in 2001, standardized testing became a more significant issue in classrooms, which in turn placed considerable pressure on students because teachers increasingly focused on tested material. Standardized tests are written, administered, and scored using the same

procedures in every school and classroom. These examinations are used to measure student achievement and evaluate educator effectiveness. However, standardized testing is controversial. Debate has arisen over the use of these tests, their validity, and the unintended adverse effects they may have on the education system.

Standardized examinations do not take into consideration every student's individual educational needs. They do not provide sufficient freedom to determine what is best for particular pupils. They do, however, generate substantial revenue for businesses that produce testing materials, books, the examinations themselves, and scoring services. This keeps those companies active in the education industry. It may also allow companies to share information with other corporations that can create markets directed toward children. Children of all ages need opportunities for physical activity, art, and other activities they enjoy. Society needs imaginative thinkers and problem solvers, not a system in which everybody is expected to think in exactly the same way. Allowing students to explore new interests can benefit them throughout their lives.

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton said that standardized examinations need to be worth taking, high quality, time-limited, unbiased, fully transparent to students and parents, only one of several methods of assessment, and connected to improving education. President Obama's administration then offered an additional $4.3 billion to school systems through the Race to the Top competition. To compete for multimillion-dollar grants, U.S. Department of Education spokesperson Peter Cunningham said that states had to incorporate test outcomes into the process of identifying effective and ineffective educators. Across the country, educators, administrators, and parents have challenged the effects of standardized testing. More than 1,400 New York school administrators signed a document to the state education commissioner stating that the examinations were deeply flawed.

The departing Education Commissioner in Texas similarly criticized excessive standardized testing. A single assessment should not become the only measure of a student's achievement or a school's success. The idea that test scores should be considered when assessing an educator's effectiveness arose from a desire to restructure education systems throughout the country. However, the intention was not necessarily for examination scores to become the sole measure by which educators are judged.

Those who favour standardized examinations argue that these tests provide a mechanism for rapid assessment and effective improvements. They promote comparability among students who have different circumstances. Despite the criticism that standardized tests have received since their introduction, supporters argue that a well-administered standardized examination can provide a useful estimate of a child's competencies. Although testing has limitations, including inattentiveness and poor testing environments, supporters contend that some common metrics and standards are necessary for measuring overall performance.

While public schools have administered standardized examinations for decades, the present testing

burden increased after Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 and required states to test all students in mathematics and English annually from third through eighth grade and once in high school. States that failed to demonstrate academic progress faced a sequence of consequences. States and districts responded by adding new tests throughout the school year to ensure that students remained on track.

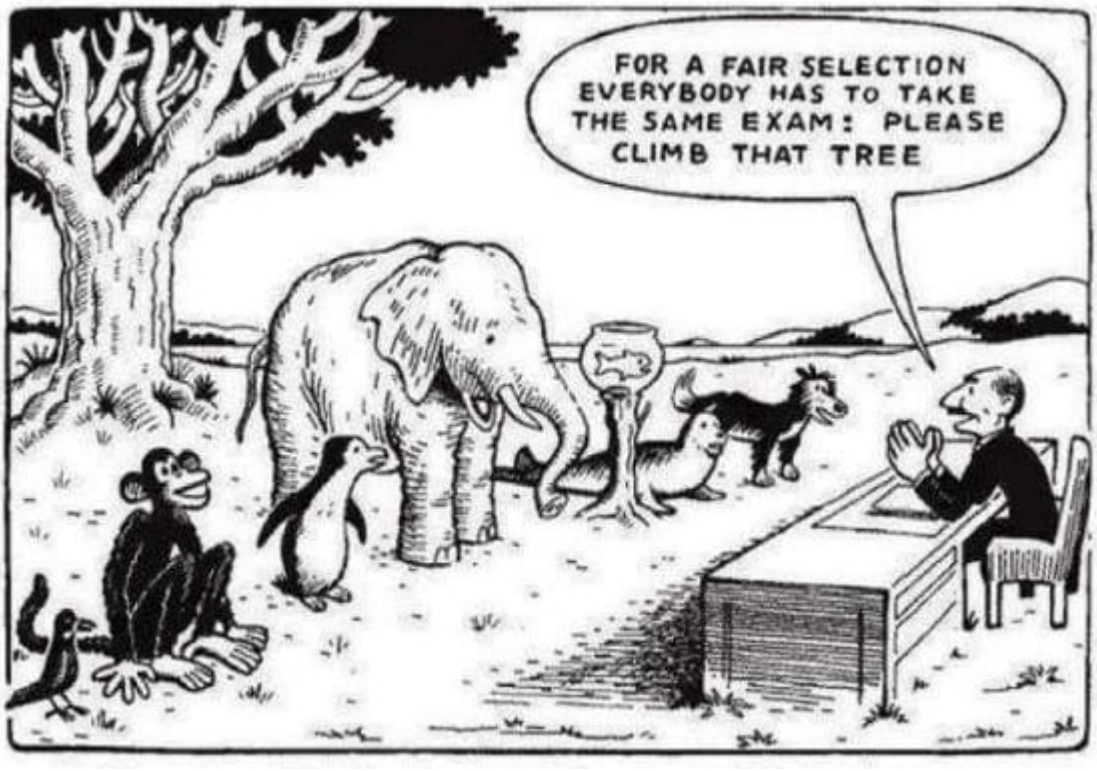
On the other hand, Obama administration policies intensified the issue. To obtain funding under the competitive Race to the Top program or receive a waiver from certain requirements, states had to evaluate educators partly on the basis of student test scores. Meanwhile, because state regulations required standardized tests primarily in mathematics and English at certain grade levels, some districts added assessments in social studies, science, languages, and even physical education so that they would have scores that could be used to evaluate teachers (Hamilton & Cole, 2007).



Pros And Cons Of Standardized Testing

The debate over standardized testing can be intense. Some people argue that standardized examinations are the best method for accurately assessing students, while others believe that standardized testing produces biased or inaccurate results. The advantages often associated with standardized testing include the following:

- It can provide benchmarks for parents and educators. This allows parents and teachers to understand how a student is performing compared with other students in the same class, district, and state.
- Standardized tests can help identify areas of difficulty for individual students, schools, and core curricula.
- They can reduce subjective grading. This can help limit marking bias and provide a consistent basis for scoring each examination item.
- They can provide a practical and consistent method of assessing what a student does or does not know in areas such as mathematics, reading, and writing.



Although this method of assessment can provide value, there are also several reasons why standardized testing is criticized:

- It can create continuous anxiety. Students may feel intense pressure to perform well on assessments. Test scores can affect student self-confidence and may lead some students to develop negative attitudes toward their abilities and school.
- Educators may end up “teaching to the test” rather than giving learners deeper, more comprehensive knowledge of a subject. This can also create a classroom environment with less creativity and may limit a learner’s educational experience through repetition and boredom.
- It assesses a student’s performance without fully accounting for outside influences. Standardized examinations do not adequately reflect factors such as test anxiety, home life, or the fact that some highly capable students do not perform well on tests.
- It reflects only a single examination performance. It does not necessarily show how much a

student has developed over the course of the year. This can be discouraging to educators who worked effectively to help their students grow and to students who made substantial efforts to improve but performed poorly on one examination.

Standardized testing can also create a narrow view of education and achievement. These tests measure only a limited range of areas, such as reading, writing, and mathematics. They do not provide a complete picture of other abilities needed for learning, such as creativity, motivation, enthusiasm, and collaboration.

• These tests can limit teachers' ability to address individual differences and focus on underlying knowledge that students need.

• Schools may provide little useful feedback to classroom teachers, which can create additional psychological pressure on educators.

• Schools can become tied to a narrow, fragmented "core" curriculum in order to obtain state funding.

• Because of funding pressures, schools may focus primarily on test-related activities while reducing opportunities for performance, music, fine arts, and other nonverbal forms of learning (Ebrahim, 2005).

• To show better student performance, schools may overlook problems created by margins of error in test scores.

• The pressure to obtain funding can cause schools to exceed reasonable limits. They may penalize students who think or learn in unusual ways.

• Schools may effectively give test developers substantial influence over the curriculum, which can be problematic.

• Students may be encouraged through coercion, incentives, and other extrinsic motivators to increase scores.

• Schools may assume that educators already know exactly what students will need to learn in the future.

At a more fundamental level, an educational methodology shaped excessively by standardized test scores may conflict with broader social needs. Environmental, demographic, technological, institutional, and intellectual changes require continuous adaptation. Adaptation requires new learning ("Book Review: Defending standardized testing", 2006). New knowledge is produced through many ways of thinking, theorizing, interpreting, relating, valuing, and imagining.

The assessment of young children must allow them to demonstrate their thinking in authentic situations. Assessment should emphasize their ability to evaluate and create information and solve

problems rather than only their ability to select correct responses in a multiple-choice format. Observation over time can also provide a more accurate picture of a child's competencies. Educators should encourage assessment designers to create tools that support rather than detract from meaningful teaching ("For Underprivileged Children, Standardized Intelligence Testing Can Do More Harm Than Good", 1995).

Schools and education systems that point with satisfaction to high scores on standardized tests may be narrowing students' thinking to only a few measurable dimensions ("How Standardized Is School Testing? An Exploratory Observational Study of Standardized Group Testing in Kindergarten", 1989). These tests significantly affect schools, educators, and children. Under the pressure of standardized testing, children may try to absorb excessive amounts of information in a short period, while instructors may focus heavily on teaching the material expected on the test.

Standardized tests place pressure on children because a single result can sometimes influence whether they repeat a grade. Poor test outcomes may make children feel uncertain about their abilities and encourage them to give up. I agree that standardized testing has a place in education, but, as Daniel Koretz argues, the issue is not that assessment should never be used. Rather, the problem is how assessment is used and the excessive weight placed on increases in test scores ("How Standardized Is School Testing? An Exploratory Observational Study of Standardized Group Testing in Kindergarten", 1989).

I am writing my proposal using a quantitative research approach. I chose this approach because it examines associations, relationships, or links between variables such as standardized testing and its effects on children, teachers, and society as a whole. In the quantitative approach, we study relationships among variables, including the influence of independent variables on dependent variables and the factors that contribute to issues within the scope of the topic. Quantitative methods emphasize standardized measurement and the statistical, scientific, or mathematical analysis of data collected through surveys, opinion polls, and reviews or obtained from existing statistical records using computational methods.

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