

Sat's: the industry of education

Business



Let me begin by offering a disclaimer, one which I can only hope is constellation for my seemingly radical views. For one, this article is nearly one man's opinion on a nationally embraced method, written from the soles of my own angst, not from the outcries of counter-culture based pretension. Now that I've got that out of the way, there is no other area to explore than my original premise: The Standard Aptitude Test has become more financially viable than academically relevant.

Select dates throughout each calendar year, thousands of college aspiring youths pile into class rooms across the nation to take the Standard Aptitude Test, a nationally acclaimed measure of a student's academic capacity. I myself have just returned from the June administering of the assessment, and my observations are plentiful. Due to the self important myriad of regulations that surround the testing, I am not at liberty to discuss any specifics of the exam I took. That being said, I'll have to stick to the conceptual fallacies that I associate with their overly-dramatized system. For one, the SAT's are not an IQ test.

They have never been masqueraded as an IQ test by any means so pointing this out is highly uncontroversial. However, that being said, does success on the SAT's represent intelligence or rather a strategic approach to test taking? Well this stems to an even larger considerations, whether work ethic or inherent intelligence are indicative of a " smart kid." Just like how school grades may not directly demonstrate a child's intelligence, the SAT's are a code to be broken by hours of study. While the polar opposites are cemented in nearly every situation (the most intelligent kids do well, the least intelligent kids do not), everything in between varies based on the art of test

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taking. In this vein, the SAT's are not about general knowledge or academic competency, they are about the skill of SAT taking.

It exists for the purpose of existing...which is to say it exists for the purpose of financial revelry. When one "studies" for the SAT's, they are not broadening their intellectual horizon by any means. They are analyzing rather simple reading and mathematical problems and learning how to answer them within the context of the standardized test alone. The ability to take this one test does not demonstrate one's ability to do anything else, and that is why it is not but a riddle of senselessness. Most inherently smart people will be able to do the bulk of the exam with ease, however the competition forged in today's college market allows a certain group to afford higher SAT scores.

This group is simply the thousands of people who study the strategies behind the ever enigmatic SAT formula. This SAT "formula" so to speak is simply attributed to the cleverness by which the exam is created. For one, the test is strictly timed, so that not too much thinking can truly be paid to any question (and don't even try guessing because they will know and take away that one point.) Additionally, the complexity and ambiguity of many questions require an in-depth understanding of what these test makers perceive as the preferred answer. These methods can be understood to the point where within seconds a student can know which answer is the "correct" one, but this is the product of study and strategy.

Strategy is in fact the keyword; perhaps the exam should be renamed: STUDY A LOT TEST, or perhaps STRATEGY ANALYSIS TEST. The funny thing

about SAT study and tactical soundness is that it can be obtained by any student through the kind folks at College Board, because after all, what better way to prepare than buying their books or taking their classes?

Welcome to the education industry, where "SAT Test Taking" is a class of its own, and the teachers are merry and happy to help...inevitably at a cost to the student. By essentially creating a unique academic (and highly profitable) frontier, College Board can reap even more monetary reward than ever thought possible by an aptitude test. Learning how to beat the test is what allows the test to be so successful, as after all, the performance on the exam is certainly secondary to the means in which they prepare. The big bucks are found in the pre-test assistance, as well as testing fees. Therefore, the more complex the strategies, the more books are sold.

The lower the scores (and here's the best part) the more tests are sold. Indeed, students can take and take the SAT's until their hearts are filled with content. Either way, the highest score in each category are the ones sent to colleges. This is blatantly set up as so to encourage students to engage in several attempts, paying a good 50 odd dollars each time to do so. Another conceptual construction used to extract money from the masses, and like sheep to the slaughter, the cultural acceptance of the SAT's is too overwhelming to overcome with logic. That is why it is best to reside to the pen, write about frustration with a hypocritical scheme and take the test peacefully; hoping common sense will achieve a quality score without the need to further buy into the hype and unnecessarily expensive homework.

For now I sit back and wait for the icing on the cake, when College Board sells my personal information to universities all over the country just to pad
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their pockets that ever so small amount extra. Sometimes I wonder how my high school and peers would react if a teacher simply stated the subject he was going to instruct, sold us some homework for "preparation", and eventually charged us a hefty fee to take the test. I can only imagine it would escalate into chaos and disorder, and yet when done on a large scale by a "credible" organization, all is well in the world of unfounded evaluation. I haven't even referenced the countless studies indicative of the SAT's pure lack of any realistic significance, but instead assumed that was obvious. I am just trying to point out the industry behind this exam, some sort of educational game of monopoly that College Board is destined to win until universal senses wake up and smell the proverbial coffee.

While this movement is nearly in place, and colleges are certainly taking the SAT's into less consideration, even those of us with a profound sense of skepticism need to take one for the team, sharpen our number two pencil, and compromise logic for a chance at college admission. Ah, such awe-inspiring irony at work. This, my comrades, is why the SAT's are the most lucrative academic scheme since private education and if you still struggle to agree...well, to each their own, but I sincerely hope playing pawn is more rewarding than it looks.