

The war on:
[a]intellect,
[b]creativity,
[c]analysis, or [d]all of
the above

[Business](#)



Standardized intelligence and performance testing have deviated so far from its original purpose, means to be executed, and effects, that if the father of modern standardized tests, Alfred Binet returned from his grave, he would die again.

His original purpose comprised of testing individual children to decide whether to give them extra help or not. His purpose came from the issues of including mentally challenged and retarded children in “ regular” children’s schools, which, of course, made the former appear less intelligent. If he created a test to determine the intelligence of students, he could separate the mentally ill ones from the “ regular” ones, providing them with more care and attention to help them succeed. In its travel from Europe to the North America, the standardized tests witnessed a change in purpose. No more did test administrators want to provide more support to less capable children, but rather they wanted to-essentially-lock up these children in schools away from the rest of society, to not shame their family.

They were considered the detriments to society, and Louis Terman, the Stanford professor who adapted the Binet test (renamed the Stanford - Binet test), spread the presumption that these children could not adjust to “ normal” life (How Standardized Testing...). Terman saw the only solution to less intelligence in shutting off all connections mentally slow and disabled children had to the outside world. Nowadays, the government uses standardized tests to judge students’ knowledge and accordingly put their teachers’ job and schools’ reputation on the line, determine admittance into college, and ‘ track their progress’. Since the reasons have changed from before, so have the effects. These tests increase pressure and stress (both <https://assignbuster.com/the-war-on-aintellebcreativitycanalysisor-dall-of-the-above/>

on students and teachers), dumb down the curriculum, and reroute time from recess or creative activities.

The federal and state governments can eliminate these consequences if they rule to reduce the importance of standardized tests in schooling and render them unnecessary for 'tracking progress'. However, standardized tests do have some positive aspects. In fact, due to the necessity to incorporate material on these tests into the curriculum, some schools have been forced to add writing to their lessons plans where "previously it was absent," likely due to under-funding (Testing- Standardized Tests...). Writing is one of the most important skills students learn from school, since it helps them throughout life- with resumes, and presentations, reports, etc. required by their jobs.

Not learning this skill will lead to future setbacks; now that standardized testing has introduced writing to lesson plans, students can acquire skills to apply later in life. One of the strongest arguments for standardized testing is that it is objective (Pros & Cons), for the most part. Standardized tests, most of which have a multiple-choice format, can be graded by computers, thus eliminating bias in grading. Bias, which sets each grader apart from another, will influence the scores due to different expectation levels, preferences in handwriting or topics, and personal experiences. However, multiple-choice tests also reduce creativity and analytical thinking because the only skill one needs is to be able to narrow down the answer choices (through factual memorized information, not critical thinking) and guess the final answer if they do not know it. Essays and discussions, on the other hand, require such

analysis and therefore stimulate students' minds and are a better judge of intelligence and knowledge.

Thus, multiple-choice questions should not occupy the majority of standardized tests. Modern intelligence testing originated in with Alfred Binet in the early 1900s (Fletcher), who wanted to distinguish between “ normal” children and mentally challenged, and retarded children. He intended to provide more help, care, and attention to less intelligent children so they do not end up as complete outsiders. Binet hoped that even mentally retarded kids would one day find a job and become independent. However, when the American professor Louis Terman at Stanford adopted Binet's test in 1916 (Fletcher), relabelling it the Stanford-Binet Test, his purpose was to detect mentally ill children so he could separate them from society. He did not want these children to socialize with “ normal” children.

Instead of seeing potential social adaptability in them (as Binet did), he confined them to an “ asylum” where parents would leave their ‘ stupid’ sons and daughters to live in a confined space. We can see already the emerging differences between the original intent and the new intent of giving standardized tests. The atrocious consequences just intensified.

Standardized tests were used on Eastern and Southern Europeans, when they started flocking into the United States as part of the wave of New Immigration after the 1880s. These tests were used to calculate the intelligence of these immigrants, and before you deem this process acceptable, know that these tests were written in English, and were not translated into the languages of these immigrants.

“ Most [immigrants] are poor and have never gone to school; many have never held a pencil or pen in their hand” (Matthews). In fact, of the immigrants coming to Ellis Island that were tested, “ testing expert H. H. Goddard identified as “ feeble minded” 83 percent of the Jews, 80 percent of Hungarians, 79 percent of Italians and 87 percent of Russians” (Matthews). Those are huge numbers, and it natural that the American public would presume these immigrants as unintelligent because they spoke different languages. However, the professors that administrated these tests should have taken into account the difference in our cultures, the different languages the immigrants spoke, and they should have attempted to avoid these errors while testing immigrants.

And that was not the end of it. If immigrants did not prove themselves intelligent on these tests (which most did not because they did not speak English), they were sterilized. Sterilized. Not able to have children. Because the government did not want to increase its population with mentally challenged/unintelligent immigrants. There is a name for that- Eugenics.

Controlling who reproduces and who does not. Does that sound moral? Wait, does that even sound like a democratic ideal? Those were the origins of standardized intelligence and performance testing in the United States. They still continue, although with not the same harmful effects of the earlier tests. However, repercussions, whether the same as before or not, still exist. One consequence of standardized tests that causes tremendous damage to students’ learning, according to a 1990s Congress report, is curriculum distortion (Testing- Standardized Tests...). Even though this action produces

higher test scores, interviews with teachers, especially in high poverty schools, revealed that they often eliminated science and social studies to concentrate more on math and English.

This method deprives students of important subjects that might shape their career in the future, or that might be their interest or strength. However, due to curriculum altering to fit standardized tests, students restricted to a math- and English-only school, might not be able to live up to their potential or find their interest, which might lie in science or social studies. This defeats the purpose of schooling, which is “ to develop active citizens, helping children, develop their own capacity for personal achievement and contributing to society as an active citizen for democracy” (Peterson). In order for students to develop their capacity for personal achievement, they have to be exposed to all the academic, artistic, and athletic areas that could assist them achieving their role of becoming better citizens and contributing to society. Standardized tests, often limiting school curriculum to only the information on them, snatch the opportunity away from citizens to be able to recognize and succeed in areas that interest them.

In fact, to further get students comfortable to the layout of standardized tests, schools teach with fill-in-the-blank worksheets and drills, and multiple-choice packets. These new methods of “ teaching” have replaced essays, discussions, and problem-solving activities (Solley). This causes students’ analytical abilities and want for more knowledge to reduce since students can easily succeed in school with low-level skills, thanks to the factual

multiple-choice questions (Solley). All that students have to do is memorize the information. Then forget it all right after the test.

Teachers' sole purpose is to teach their students about information that will be on the standardized tests. Thus, when these tests are over, teachers have nothing to drill students for anymore, and the students, knowing this fact, find it unnecessary to remember information memorized for the tests. This just proves that standardized tests do not assess true knowledge- if students are just going to memorize a bunch of information for a test and then forget it after because they do not have to remember it, these students have really not gained any knowledge! That is the reason teachers use "rote drills" in tested subjects- to make their students memorize certain facts and other information to aid them on the standardized tests (Testing- Standardized Tests...). However, this is information that students will not necessarily be able to use in any other format. This is because teachers encourage students to do well on the test, not to understand and master the material being taught.

Therefore, students become "less intrinsically motivated, they learn less, and they are less willing to persist with difficult problems" (Testing- Standardized Tests...). Want for knowledge is not very prominent on students' agenda if all they need to know are the basics. This lack of motivation to go to the depths of a problem and solve it, warns us of a future with little change, poor diplomacy, and increasing demand for "skilled workers". These students will remain unenergetic about knowledge, and will only solve problems with glaringly obvious solutions. They will not bother

trying to understand the causes of problems that do not offer such easy solutions.

This might lead our country into many economic and foreign policy problems. The national economy might go into a prolonged depression due to lazy leaders that do not want to understand and find a solution to the underlying cause of the depression. Humankind might lose one of its most treasured values- inquisitiveness. An important cause for all the causes of the unimportance and ineffectiveness of standardized tests is the lack of a single national or international curriculum (Testing-Standardized Tests...). This causes the nonconformity in education curriculum among countries and states/provinces. Due to the disparities in the curriculum, a government cannot attempt to give one test to all the students in that country.

That would be like lining up different animals and demanding them all to do a task that might only be possible for one of the animals (Figure 1). This is essentially the case with standardized tests. Students come from different backgrounds, have different learning needs, and excel in different subjects. Trying to “standardize” their capabilities creates a monotonous and highly conformist population, all under the spell of standardized tests’ forbiddance of individual expression and excellence. It is not unlike Apple’s portrayal of “1984” by George Orwell in its advertisement of its first laptop in 1984 (MTagger). Big Brother, in this case would represent the standardized tests, and the proles would represent the students and even other people (for their line of careers, etc.) that take the standardized tests. Big Brother makes all these people the same, refusing to allow anyone to dissent or show

individualism. However, an unnamed actress comes running holding a hammer and rebelling against all the rules set up by Big Brother (witnessed by her difference in appearance- her clothes, her hair, and the fact that she is holding a hammer to-literally- break all the rules and conformity). The hammer that the woman carries is of special significance, symbolizing Apple's introduction of the first ever laptop- a revolutionary change in American society, that would eventually lead to the world.

The hammer symbolizes the end of standardized testing. Standardized tests have become such an integral part of the American education system that despite anti-standardized testing sentiments, students, parents, and practically everyone living in the U. S. cannot imagine a world without standardized tests. Without requirements to know only basic information; without the ability to express oneself; without the opportunity to succeed in school and life in one's own unique way.

The government claims that everyone must be tested equally as if we were all extensions of the same person, yet at the same time, acknowledges that everyone is unique and must succeed using their idiosyncratic potential.

Give room for creativity, for " un-conventionalism", for change. Change and unique ideas do not imply negative consequences, just difference.

Standardized tests have strayed far from their original purpose to find individual differences; they have now started indirectly oppressing differences, leading students and teachers everywhere to follow the conventions of standardized testing. We need to bring individualism back;

we need to reignite inquisitiveness and a want for knowledge; we need to discontinue the use of standardized tests.

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