Ethics & Assessment in the Workplace

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Overview of session

- Why we use assessments
- Matters to consider
- Some practical scenarios
- Closing thoughts
Why do we use assessments?
Why do we measure?

- **Selection**
  - Who has the skills we need?
  - Who has the potential to do what we require?

- **Development**
  - What knowledge and skills do we need to develop in order to be ready for the future?
  - What experiences and opportunities do we need to provide?
  - How effective are we in applying these skills?

- **Performance Management**
  - How are we currently doing?
  - Which skills are still lacking?

- **Succession Planning**
  - Who are our high-flyers?
  - Who is able to do the job at the next level?
What are the benefits of using objective assessments?

**Cost of selection errors:**
- Recruitment & selection
- Training & development
- Poor performance
- Individual stress
- Impact on team & individual morale

**The objectivity of testing:**
- Standardisation & fairness
- Comprehensive & detailed data
- Subjectivity of interviews

**The validity of testing:**
- Relation to job inherent requirements
- Link to predicting job performance / success
- Cost-benefit

**Public relations:**
- Efficiency of testing groups
- Professional and committed employer
- Objectivity of multi-method approach
What can go wrong?

- Bias against a specific group
- Misinterpretation of results
- Psychological harm to the individual
- Inappropriate measures are used
- Inconsistent results
- Cost of litigation
- Leakage of items to the public
- Online assessment?
- Negative stigma regarding testing
- Unfair decisions
- Risk to organizational reputation
Resources for testing practices in South Africa

- HPCSA (2006) Ethical Rules of Conduct Pertaining Specifically to the Profession of Psychology
- SIOPSA (2006) Code of Practice for Psychological and Other Similar Assessment in the Workplace
- SIOPSA (2005) Guidelines for the Validation and Use of Assessment Procedures for the Workplace
- APA (2000) Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers
- RSA (1998) Employment Equity Act
Matters to consider
(Substantive & Procedural Fairness)
Matters to consider in test choice

- **Job Inherent Requirements**
  - Job Analysis, job analysis, job analysis

- **Reliability**
  - consistency of measurement

- **Fairness**
  - consistency of process/procedure

- **Bias**
  - consistent measurement between groups

- **Validity**
  - Face validity
  - Content validity
  - Construct validity
  - Criterion-related validity

- **Cost and Return on Investment**
The importance of a testing policy

A policy on testing will need to cover most if not all the following issues (PAI, 2006):

• Proper test use
• Security of materials and scores
• Who can administer tests, score and interpret tests
• Test user training
• Test taker preparation
• Access to materials and security
• Access to test results and test score confidentiality
• Feedback of results to test takers
• Responsibility to test takers before, during and after test sessions
• Responsibilities and accountability of each individual user
Some practical scenarios
Practical scenario #1

• A candidate completed assessments for a commissioning client two months ago and was appointed.
• The candidate has now contacted you to say that he is applying for new jobs, and one of the organisations he has applied to requires him to do the same assessments as part of their processes.
• He states he has just done the assessments and does not want to redo them (he is a psychologist, believes that his knowledge may lead him to manipulate the assessments, and argues that the original assessment results are still valid)
• However he refuses to allow you to approach your original commissioning client to ask their permission for you to use his assessment data for a new application, as he doesn’t want his current employer to know he’s looking.
• Does the candidate have the right to instruct you to re-use his assessment data for the new client?
Practical scenario #2

• One of your client organisations uses assessments as part of the standard selection process for enterprise managers.
• You receive an angry phone-call from a lawyer demanding to receive the results of an applicant you recently assessed for your client organisation.
• You call your client; they instructed the applicant to contact you for feedback, although they do not disclose why they declined the applicant.
• Speaking with the lawyer again, he states the applicant has already set up and run two other successful businesses, and it is unfair to reject him on the basis of the assessment results alone.
• You offer a feedback session to the applicant – as contracted with your client – and provide a number of dates and times for the session.
• In the interim, you receive a lawyer’s letter stating that legal action will be taken against you should you not email the assessment results to the lawyer within 24 hours.
Practical scenario #3

• You have just completed a validation study for a client organisation, which involved 150 participants in an entry-level customer service role. The purpose of the study was to provide the HR Manager with evidence to support her argument of introducing assessments into the selection process for future appointments.
• The participants had been appointed to their roles based on a single interview; the results of the assessments – validated by their performance results – suggest that a number of participants are not well suited for the job requirements.
• You receive an email from the HR Manager asking for the individual assessment reports of each participant, for feedback purposes.
• No one in the HR department is trained to provide feedback on the assessment battery used.
Practical scenario #4

- You are consulting to a client who has a great employer brand and reputation for accepting only the best calibre candidates.
- A new ability test battery was recently introduced, as the previous battery used was dated and the client wanted assessments that would be more in line with their employer brand.
- At the time you considered the evidence of relationships between the two batteries and gave recommendations on the cut-offs to be used (the client was accustomed to using the 70th %ile previously).
- The client has come back saying that too many candidates are making the grade against the new cut-offs, and they need the assessments to distinguish more between candidates.
- They have asked to use the international benchmarks and apply the same cut-offs, arguing that they are an international company as they have offices in Sydney as well as throughout South Africa.
Practical scenario #5

• Six months ago you worked on a development centre project for a company, which included several simulations, a personality questionnaire, career interview and detailed individual feedback.
• You have now been called back to explain a discrepancy observed in the results. One of the candidates was being considered to make the move to the position earmarked for him during the development centre.
• The company re-assessed the candidate using the same personality questionnaire but noticed distinct changes in the results between the two assessments, with the current results indicating a weak fit to the role.
• During a discussion you have with the candidate he discloses that his wife passed away two months ago and he has been struggling with depression.
• The company demands to know why the results are so different, or if you are trying to hide that there is something wrong with the test (which they use widely in their selection processes).
Some closing thoughts...
Ethical decision-making
(Van Vuuren & Schlebusch, 2013)

• What possible actions can I take? **OPTIONS**
• Is it aligned to my values? **INTEGRITY**
• Is it legal / procedural? **COMPLIANCE**
• Can I tell people about it? **DISCLOSURE**
• Will stakeholders be ok with it? **FAIRNESS**
• If I do it, will I feel bad? **PERSONAL**
• Do I need expert advice? **DIALOGUE**
If you have a question regarding ethical business practices, or wish to report a concern, you can contact the SIOPSA Ethics Helpdesk on ethics@siopsa.org.za.

The SIOPSA Ethics Committee will review the question or concern, and revert with feedback as quickly as possible.

The Committee will endeavour to facilitate, educate and guide the person who raised the issue.
THANK YOU

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