

Issues and Challenges in Assessing Learners with Disabilities

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Abstract

The general principle underlying the provision of test accommodations (or special arrangements) is that standard test content, format, or administration should be modified when testing individuals with disabilities in the interest of fairness and equity. It has been well acknowledged in the Code of Ethics and Practices which are commonly abided by developers of large-scale standardized assessments around the world that everything possible should be done to meet the special requirements of test-takers with disabilities while ensuring that the assessment objectives are still met (AERA/APA/NCME, 1999; ILTA; 2010; ALTE, 2010). However, the question as to how such testing practice has been implemented is rarely investigated empirically. This paper investigates the match between theory and practice in the provision of test accommodations for test-takers with disabilities in the context of the GEPT by examining the perspectives of various stakeholder groups, including test-takers, test examiners, test administrators, and test material developers. Both qualitative and quantitative data, collected by means of questionnaire and structured interviews, will be analyzed. The paper aims to explore the issues and challenges, and to identify areas for further investigations in this area. It is also hoped that the paper can contribute to the existing literature on test impact as it concerns language assessment for learners with disabilities (Taylor & Khalifa, in press).