Presentation Abstract

*CEPA: The development of an admissions test in the UAE*

The Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) is used by the three federal institutions of higher education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE University, Zayed University, and the Higher Colleges of Technology) for general admission and placement into foundation programs. It consists of two tests, CEPA-Math and CEPA-English, each available in paper-based (PBT) and computer-based (CBT) formats. Both tests are given to around 17,000 applicants per year. The multiple-choice components of the exams are scored using IRT (Item Response Theory) three-parameter modeling. The writing component of CEPA-English is double-blind marked by experts in the field and the scores are moderated using a multi-faceted Rasch model. Given the link between the many versions of each test, the scores can be compared across years and used as a tool to track the progress of the nation and evaluate the performance of the educational system. This presentation will describe CEPA’s development, its content, reliability and validity as a predictor of academic success. Finally, the presenter will explain how a locally-developed solution such as CEPA can often be as effective as an imported one by maintaining high quality-control standards and taking culture and context into consideration.