



CENTER FOR THE STUDY
OF BOYS' & GIRLS' LIVES

Situational Judgment in Relational Teaching: Developing a New Tool for Professional Assessment

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Situational Judgment Tests

Situational judgment tests have been used for over fifty years, primarily in personnel selection and professional development. The tests typically present test-takers with realistic, hypothetical scenarios in which they are asked either to identify the most appropriate response or to rank the responses in the order they feel is most effective. Situational judgment tests tend to determine behavioral tendencies, assessing how an individual will behave in a certain situation, and can be used to suggest the most effective course in particular professional challenges.

The situational judgment test is unlike other psychological tests in that it is not acquired off the shelf but is a bespoke tool, tailor-made to suit the role requirements of particular work contexts, such as healthcare practice. As such, situational judgment tests are less a type of test than a method for designing tests. The development of a situational judgment test begins with conducting a job analysis and an inventory of the attributes and behaviors associated with successful professional practice. This framework forms the basis for a set of situations where the judgment of the prospective professional would come into play. As part of the development process, subject matter experts (highly rated employees) are asked to suggest effective and less effective solutions to the situation; a different group of subject matter experts then rate these responses from best to worst. The test is scored with the highest ranked options giving the respondent the higher score. Scores on the situational judgment

tests are most meaningful when they have shown a strong and reliable association with other measures of job success.

Relational Teaching

Two global studies were conducted between 2008-2012 sponsored by the International Boys' Schools Coalition, in which narratives were collected from over 2,000 teachers and 2,500 adolescent boys across approximately 40 schools in 6 countries, to identify elements of successful teaching strategies with boys. Central to the findings of these studies is the primary role of relationship for engaging boys in learning. In an historical context in which boys predominate at the lower end of achievement rankings across all demographic groups and in practically every country, the lesson from practitioners and boys themselves was that a relational connection is a necessary condition for engaging boys in learning. This finding has received independent support from other research that shows a link between the quality of teacher-student relationships and academic achievement, demonstrating the high degree to which both positive and negative teacher-student relationships affect scholastic achievement.

Respondents highlighted the relational dimensions of teaching and coaching and described the features of effective and ineffective relational pedagogy. These survey and focus group studies essentially represent a job analysis of the relational teacher and have allowed the identification of the attributes and behaviors integral to successful relational pedagogy.

Master Teaching

Following on the heels of the relational teaching studies, the IBSC also conducted a master teaching inquiry at 3 school sites from 2013-14, partnered with a research team from Teachers College of Columbia University. Groups of teachers nominated by their schools as "master" teachers for their effectiveness with students gathered for workshops at one of the research sites, where they were asked to react to a series of prompts, role-play while being filmed, and provide analysis and feedback to the research team. As the project report states, "The workshops were designed to elicit participant understanding, via interaction, of what master teachers do as well as how they developed in their role. We were interested in how participating teachers conceived mastery and what they knew, collectively, in regard to a series of questions of importance to them about teaching boys and for boys' learning." Among the key findings of the project were the central roles of relationships – as "holding environments" for learning – and of master teachers situational judgment.

As the report concludes,

Situational judgment improves over time in an organic, evolutionary way. There are no magic fixes or panaceas to help teachers to achieve mastery in this area. Instead, situational judgment is formed by a series of incremental decisions based on the context, the repertoire of strategies constructed over time, and a complex interaction of *noticing* and cumulative action and learning.

Situational Judgment Test for Relational Teaching

In what has been a third or follow up phase of the Teaching Boys research project, in which members of the research team have presented the findings of the studies to educational practitioners around the world, a common question has been, ‘Is there a way to assess the relational skill of candidates for teaching positions?’ While some have hypothesized an overlap between relational pedagogy and emotional intelligence, in fact the relational teaching study suggested that effective relational pedagogy, while often requiring interpersonal sensitivity and responsiveness to students in need, was nonetheless distinct from emotional intelligence. But with a job analysis for the relational teacher effectively completed and many school leaders eager for practical strategies to implement the findings of the relational study in school policy and practice, it seems a logical step to design a situational judgment test for relational teaching. Schools have suggested many uses for such a test, such as hiring decisions, professional growth and peer coaching, among others.

Fortunately a number of schools have offered themselves as pilot sites for the development of just such a test.

Protocol for Test Development

In preparation for the development phase, a team has been assembled and a plan imagined. The principal researchers include the lead investigator on the IBSC-sponsored studies, Michael Reichert, and a key thought partner and organizer on both studies as well as on the master teacher study, Brad Adams, who now works as an independent consultant. In addition, experts in the psychometric development of assessment instruments have agreed to be involved. It is also expected that staff at each pilot school will also play key roles in the collection and organization of data as well as serving as member checks for the valid interpretation of results.

These steps are imagined for the development of the custom-tailored relational judgment test:

1. Map key domains for relational teaching from relational teaching framework derived from both the global studies and subsequent feedback from practitioners and demonstration schools.

2. Conduct a concordance analysis of this framework against the findings of the master teaching study.
3. Develop scenarios for situational judgment items from the rich dataset of respondent narratives in the relational studies.
4. Present scenarios, open ended, to a small sample of teachers at non-pilot schools (individually or in focus groups) to elicit and review response options.
 - a. Ask teachers what they think the best response would be and about other less desirable and undesirable responses.
 - b. Goal is to get highest quality, authentic response options from teachers.
5. Create situational judgment items using scenarios and responses from teachers.
 - a. Consult with the project's psychometrician to ensure that the items are set up to produce valid and reliable data, including:
 - i. Item type: ranking options, evaluating individual options, selecting "best" option, etc.
 - ii. Scoring model
 - iii. Identification of underlying construct(s)
 - iv. Number of items per construct
6. Conduct cognitive interviews with another sample of teachers from non-norming schools (preferably individually). A cognitive interview is where respondents read through questions and thinks aloud about his/her thoughts on the question and the response options. The goal is to make sure that the question wording makes sense, that respondents fully understand the questions as designed, and to get some feedback to the quality of the items.
7. Finalize pilot testing protocol
 - a. Update items following cognitive interviews
 - b. Create administrative protocol
 - c. Upload instrument onto surveymonkey
8. Pilot instrument at a non-norming school.
9. Analyze pilot results psychometrically
 - a. Identify high and low performing items
 - b. Revise/remove poor items
10. Finalize instrument
11. Administer instrument to norming sample (all teachers at partner schools)
12. Collect additional school data for norming sample (schools provide)
 - a. Measures of teacher effectiveness (e.g., student evaluations, value-added measures, professional assessment ratings, if possible)
 - b. School demographics
13. Analyze norming data
 - a. Item analysis
 - b. Scoring

- c. Scaling
 - d. Correlations with other data to establish validity
14. Reporting scores
- a. Develop individual report
 - b. Develop school report

