DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING POTENTIAL: A NEW PARADIGM

DAVID TZURIEL

School of Education
Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Abstract: Dynamic assessment refers to an assessment, by an active teaching process, of a child’s perception, learning, thinking, and problem solving. The process is aimed at modifying an individual’s cognitive functioning and observing subsequent changes in learning and problem-solving patterns within the testing situation (Tzuriel, 2001). Dynamic assessment (DA) has been motivated by the inadequacy of conventional static tests to provide accurate information about the individual’s learning ability, specific deficient functions, change processes, and mediational strategies that are responsible for cognitive modifiability. The need to develop DA tests have emerged because of criticism on static standardized tests. The main criticism on standardized static tests can be summarized in the following.

Main Criticism on Static Tests

Standardized static tests are bias towards minority groups and children with special needs. Children who come from low socioeconomic status families do not have adequate learning opportunities or efficient mediation within the family and therefore fail in academic performance or in standard tests. Their failure does not reflect lack of intellectual ability but rather lack of learning strategies, learning habits, and motivation to master cognitive tasks.

Static tests are characterized by selective administration procedures and selective interpretation of results among high-risk children. In other words, more strict procedures and stricter interpretation of results are used with children coming from low SES families or children with special needs than with children coming from high SES families or children with no special needs. Motivational, emotional, and personality factors are not well taken in static tests. Research literature and teaching experience shows that the motivational, emotional and personality factors are no less important than the "pure" cognitive factors. Unfortunately these factors are not given the proper attention in static tests or even totally neglected. Static tests lack information on learning and meta-cognitive processes. Those processes

1Address of correspondence: tzuried@mail.biu.ac.il