Motivational Aspects of Test-Taking
Measuring Test-Taking Motivation in Swedish National Test Contexts

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Akademiisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för
avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt förvar i
Hörsal 1031, Norra beteendevetarhuset,
fredagen den 3 mars, kl. 10:00.
Avhandlingen kommer att förvaras på svenska.

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Abstract
The overall aim of the work underlying this thesis was to improve the understanding of students’ test-taking motivation in connection to achievement tests for young adolescents. The thesis includes four studies and a summary. All four studies explore test-taking motivation and are all connected to validity in one way or another. The expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation was used as a theoretical framework in the operationalization and measurement of test-taking motivation and the achievement tests in focus were the Swedish national test in science for grade nine students, a Swedish national test in mathematics for upper secondary students and field trials for both these tests.

In the first study psychometric properties of an expectancy-value based questionnaire measuring five aspects of test-taking motivation were evaluated. Findings provided support for construct validity, as internal structure of the data corresponded to the theoretical model, partial scalar invariance was obtained and correlations between test-taking motivation and test performance were found. In the second study the students’ test-taking motivation at the field trial and the national test were analysed in more detail. The analyses showed a significant increase in all test-taking motivation aspects between the field trial and the regular national test. Test-taking motivation at the field trial did also differ between school classes and test anxiety and expectancies differed between females and males. Further, effort, expectancies, importance and interest were significant predictors of test score after preliminary grades had been accounted for. The third study was an interview study aiming to examine students’ test-taking motivation at national test as well as the field trial in more depth. The interviews provided a rich understanding of the different aspects of test-taking motivation as described by the expectancy-value theory, for example why students find the national test important and what they mean by giving effort to a test. In the fourth study psychometric properties of an extended and revised test-taking motivation questionnaire were evaluated in a new sample of students. The analysis showed that the questionnaire had sound psychometric properties and supported the assumption that test-taking motivation consists of several distinctly different aspects, but also showed that the different subscales are highly related.

In conclusion, the results provide support for several aspects of construct validity of the test-taking motivation questionnaire. Further, all studies showed that test-taking motivation differ between test with different stakes as well as between students and classes taking similar tests. Test-taking motivation also seem to affect test results. Thus, all students do not seem to be equally motivated to do their best on all tests and consideration should be taken to how students approach and experience each specific test when planning and interpreting achievement tests.

Keywords
Test-taking motivation, Swedish national tests, validity, expectancy-value theory, task value, expectancies, young adolescents, self-report instrument, interview, structural equation modelling, test stakes

Language  ISBN  ISSN  Number of pages
English  978-91-7601-672-5  1652-9650  63 + 4 papers