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Academic Literacy, the pteep, and the prediction of academic success

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ABSTRACT

Higher education and more specifically access to higher education has been a critical issue in the post-apartheid South Africa. With the aim of increasing access to higher education in order to achieve equity and redress, more students have been entering the higher education sector (73% of students are black and more than 50% are women) and a participation rate of 18% has been achieved. However, graduation rates remain low and attrition rates high, therefore the concepts of access and academic success need to be seen in the same light (Badsha, 2004).

The aim of the present study is to look at a cognitive predictor of academic success, that is, the PTEEP academic literacy test. The purpose is to measure the validity of the PTEEP language proficiency test, as a predictor of academic literacy, on the University of Witwatersrand Humanity students' academic success.

The research approach for the study may be described as exploratory-descriptive in nature and was conducted within a quantitative framework. The participants comprised of 63 students from the 2004 cohort of students that gained admission to the university by means of the alternative selection procedure utilized by the Wits Faculty of Humanities. Descriptive and inferential statistics are employed to summarise and report the sample data in a meaningful way.

The analysis of the present research focused on the PTEEP test, the specific PTEEP clusters, and academic success ratings in conjunction with variables such as gender and specific degrees within the Faculty of Humanities. The major findings of the present study indicate that there is no significant relationship between the PTEEP academic literacy test and academic success, and furthermore the PTEEP academic literacy test does not appear to be a good predictor of academic performance. These results are inconsistent with a large body of research indicating the predictive validity of the PTEEP test. However, the results do suggest that 'Genre', a subtest of the

PTEEP test, demonstrates a strong relationship with academic success and is a significant predictor of academic success in this study.

The results indicate the further exploration into cognitive developmental theory and the role it may play in developing admissions tests. Future research also needs to include other personal and situational variables over a longer period of time that could influence cognitive development and academic success.

Keywords: higher education, access testing, cognitive developmental theory, academic success