

to applicants. Once the attribute is physically measured, numbers or scores are determined (in the example, the programming knowledge test is scored). At that point, the applicants' scores are evaluated (which scores meet the job requirements), and a selection decision can be made (e.g., hire an information technology analyst).

Of course, in practice, this textbook process is often not followed explicitly, and thus selection errors are more likely. For example, if the methods used to determine scores on an attribute are not explicitly determined and evaluated, the scores themselves may be incorrect. Similarly, if the evaluation of the scores is not systematic, each selection decision maker may put his or her own spin on the scores, thereby defeating the purpose of careful measurement. The best way to avoid these problems is for all those involved in selection decisions to go through each step of the measurement process depicted in Exhibit 7.1, apply it to the job(s) in question, and reach agreement at each step of the way.

Standardization

The hallmark of sound measurement practice is standardization.² Standardization is a means of controlling the influence of outside or extraneous factors on the scores generated by the measure and ensuring that, as much as possible, the scores obtained reflect the attribute measured.

A standardized measure has three basic properties:

1. The content is identical for all objects measured (e.g., all job applicants take the same test).
2. The administration of the measure is identical for all objects (e.g., all job applicants have the same time limit on a test).
3. The rules for assigning numbers are clearly specified and agreed on in advance (e.g., a scoring key for the test is developed before it is administered).

These seemingly simple and straightforward characteristics of standardization of measures have substantial implications for the conduct of many staffing activities. These implications will become apparent throughout the remainder of this text. For example, assessment devices, such as the employment interview and letters of reference, often fail to meet the requirements for standardization, and organizations must undertake steps to make them more standardized.

Levels of Measurement

There are varying degrees of precision in measuring attributes and in representing differences among objects in terms of attributes. Accordingly, there are different levels or scales of measurement.³ It is common to classify any particular measure as falling into one of four levels of measurement: nominal, ordinal, interval, or ratio.

Nominal. With nominal scales, a given attribute is categorized, and numbers are assigned to the categories. With or without numbers, however, there is no order or