

# Implementation of Continuous Assessment in Nigeria

$$\text{Intelligence quotient} = \frac{\text{Mental age}}{\text{Chronological age}} \times 100$$

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum fx}{n}, \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2}{n}}$$

**Bernard Numgwo Atsumbe**

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# Implementation of Continuous Assessment in Nigeria

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## PREFACE

**E**ducational assessment provides the necessary feedback required to maximize the outcome of educational efforts. The assessment of learning provides objective evidences necessary in the decision-making process in education. Data collected as a result of continuous assessment helps teachers to better understand their strengths and weaknesses in addition to providing a comprehensive picture of each student over a period of time. Such information will help in education and vocational placement of students.

The author in this book "**Implementation of Continuous Assessment in Nigeria**" has attempted to critically consider pertinent issues in the implementation of continuous assessment in Nigeria. It is essentially written for teachers, education students in Colleges of Education and Universities, parents, school administrators and the general readers who desire to know enough about the concept of continuous assessment and its implementation in Nigerian schools. This timely volume covers the concept of continuous assessment, associated challenges in implementation and strategies for overcoming these problems.

This book is designed as a practical tool to facilitate the achievement of the goals of continuous assessment which is an integral part of the new system of education. As such, the book deals with central issues like types of tests, basic statistics for continuous assessment, what is to be continuously assessed etc. Atsumbe interestingly introduced a new dimension to continuous application of computer technologies to the implementation of continuous assessment which you will find interesting.

Apart from its relevance to the new system of education, the book is related to measurement and evaluation courses at the National

Certificate of Education (NCE), undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Other related topics like examination mal-practice, challenges facing examination bodies like West Africa Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) and Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination Board (JAMB) were succinctly discussed. To further stimulate the readers, psychological traits such as intelligence, aptitude, attitude, interest, achievement and personality are explained as parts of what should be assessed.

In the light of the foregoing, this book is very timely; I therefore recommend the book to all students of Education in Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education as a resource material. The book is also useful to professional teachers; Research Institutes of Education, Academics, Government Educational Agencies, Non Governmental Agencies, and parents with strong interest in continuous assessment as well as general readers.

To this end, the author Dr. Atsumbe Bernard, a professional teacher, has once again presented a readable book which is a vital contribution to the body of knowledge and assets to readers.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

# TYPES OF TESTS

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**A** test is a sample of human behaviour. This sample is usually expressed quantitatively. A test is a smaller instrument of measurement and as a result, bears the major attribute of measurement that is, its quantitative nature. A series of tests will yield measurement score. A test present a set of questions to be answered (Denga, 1987).

The implementation of educational measurement and evaluation techniques is transmitted by the major types of tests to be discussed in this chapter. These major types of tests are:

1. The Essay test
2. The Objectives Test
3. The Oral Test
4. The Performance Test

These tests are discussed as listed above. The reader especially the students and the class teacher will derive the necessary skills to understand and use the tests for more meaningful measurement and evaluation in the school system.

### 1. The Essay Test

Essay test is subjective, it requires the student to use ideas to describe, explain and elaborate on the answers. The essay test has

suffered severe criticisms over the years, and to many teachers it is a cumbersome evaluation procedure that places an unwanted burden on those who must use it. Surprisingly, the essay test still hangs tough and maintains its position among evaluation techniques. The essay test has advantages but it also has disadvantages.

### **Advantages of the Essay Test**

- i) It is easier to set than objective tests.
- ii) It tests higher order mental processes such as application, synthesis, analysis and evaluation better than other tests.
- iii) It measures originality and eventuality which are not easy to measure through other types of tests.
- iv) It tests students' ability to supply rather than select correct answers from a multiple choice.
- v) It calls for a logical and effective organization of the learnt material
- vi) It promotes effective expression, articulation, integration and synthesis of material in a coherent and logical manner
- vii) The skills required by the essay test parallel many of those skills needed in real life situation. Clear communication, integrated presentation, logical and coherent expression are real-life skills that must be developed.

### **Disadvantages of the Essay Tests**

- i) Lack of scoring economy. The essay test makes a lot of demand on time and expertise of the maker. No clerk or house boy can grade an essay test as is the case with multiple

choice tests once the scoring key is made. It is expensive therefore, to give an essay test.

- ii) Scores unreliability. The scoring of an essay tests involves some personal judgment. Different scores may judge the responses differently.
- iii) It has poor predictive validity because of low scorer reliability and limited content sampling.
- iv) It is difficult to grade though easy to set.
- v) Lack of content validity. This is due to limited content sampling. Since the essay questions are somewhat restricted to a few areas of curriculum, they cannot sample adequately the content covered. What is covered in the essay test may not validly measure the objectives of the course.
- vi) Students who fail to understand the wording of the question may fail the examination or get the particular question wrong, not necessarily due to lack of knowledge but because of failure to understand the question.
- vii) It may penalize some students unduly. If the examination or test is not carefully drawn, it may contain several easy and difficult questions. A good student may naturally be attracted to the difficult questions that pose a greater challenge. Since marks are equally distributed to easy and challenging questions those who answer relatively easy questions very well may score higher than those who attempted very difficult questions. The difficulty level of all essay questions may be checked for a good balance in terms of difficulty.

## 2. Objective Type Tests

This is the type of tests that requires the students to select a response from a number of previously available responses. In



objectives test the answers can be marked with out the feelings, biases, knowledge or ignorance of the examiner affecting the scores obtained. Objective type tests are sub-divided into the:

- (a) Completion test
- (b) True test or false test
- (c) The matching test and
- (d) Multiple choice tests.

While the essay test has been subjected to criticism of poor content sampling, scorer unreliability, difficulty in scoring thus, making it a time-consuming exercise. The objective type tests on the other hand, are viewed as way of overcoming these problems. This is because they save time since a scoring key is usually constructed or a computer is used to score them. They sample a wider content than essay type tests and thus lead to a higher content validity and higher reliability. They are easy to score though more difficult to set. The time for students to write and for teacher to score objective tests is relatively short.

Some critics argue that objective test do not measure the higher mental processes, such as application, synthesis, understanding and analysis. But if objectives tests are well planned and constructed, they can measure the higher mental processes. They also contend that objective test encourage guessing and rote learning. These criticisms hold true especially when objective tests are handled by inexperienced teachers.

#### **Important Consideration in Writing Objective Tests**

- i) Items should be written clearly and specifically. The stem of the question should be explicitly stated so that the options (foils) can relate smoothly to it.



- ii) While it is good skills to make all options plausible and attractive, there should be only one correct or best answer for every problem or question.
- iii) The test must cover important facts and not trivialities. It is important to ask students to recall the day Nigeria become an Independent nation, but certainly not important to expect students to recall the colour of the dress the first presidents of Nigeria wore on the first Independence Day.
- iv) Questions must be related to students' ability and age level as well as the executed curriculum. Teachers should consider the language difficulty in relation to the age and experience of the examinees. If the objective is to test the recall of facts then the language should not be made too complicated to compound the difficulty of the test.
- v) Minimize the use of "all of the above" and none of the above". This habit belongs to lazy examiners who do not want to look for items to include as options.
- vi) Sentences should not be lifted verbatim from the text and put in the examination. This practice will encourage cramming large sections of the textbook in anticipation that such sections might be cited with some words omitted out to be filled in.
- vii) Avoid providing clues in the examination which will help the students to answer certain questions. An answer to one question should not provide clues to answering another. Questions should be independent from one another.
- viii) The statement of questions in negative form should be discouraged.

- ix) Make all options equal in length. Items that are short or longer than the rest may attract the examinees as either the correct or wrong options because of their length.
- x) Move round the correct answer rather randomly to the letters of the alphabet and try to distribute the correct answers in such a way that each letter of the alphabet gets approximately the same number of correct answers. Avoid establishing a pattern of answers. This can be done if all the correct answers coincide with letter 'a' or 'b' or 'c' or any other letter for that matter.

#### **(a) The Completion Test**

The completion test is often grouped with objective tests. A statement or sentence is presented with one or more missing words, which the students must provide or complete correctly. For example "Nigeria became a republic in the year -----" will be a good completion question in a social studies test. A completion test questions in Metal work technology could be worded as "Metals are classified as ----- and ----- Metals", Aluminium is an example of a - ----- - Metal.

#### **Advantages of Completion Test**

1. It measures "recall" which is one of the important levels of cognitive domains
2. It minimized guessing since there is only one word or phrase to fill the blank. The multiple alternative always gives in a multiple choice test are not unvalued and enhance guessing is thus minimized.

3. It is relatively easy to construct. There is no need to construct options.
4. It has a relatively higher score reliability compared to other supply-test since the items are constructed to give one correct response.

### **Disadvantages of Completion Test**

1. It may encourage the cramming of a section or sentences from a text in anticipation that such areas may be included in the completion exercise.
2. It does not measure effectively the important higher-order material processes such as analysis, synthesis, understanding and evaluation. One word answers cannot effectively measure these higher-order mental processes.
3. It lacks the scoring economy and ease associated with other objective type tests; generally, it cannot be machine scored or hand-scored as rapidly as other types of objective tests. One has to read the written response and not simply check the selected letter as is the case with other objective type tests.

### **(b) The True/False Test**

The true/false type tests consist of a statement of facts or an explanation and then follow it up with the question of whether it is true or false. Other varieties include Yes/No and Right or Wrong. The true/false type test is notoriously popular among teachers who mistakenly feel that constructing the true/false item is easy. With adequate planning and conscious effort, the true/false test can score



as useful type of selection-type examination. Example: "Metals with higher carbon contents are usually stronger" this statement can be regarded as True/False, Right/Wrong or Yes/No response.

### **Advantages of True/False Test**

1. It can cover a wide area of content and is therefore, comprehensive in terms of content sampling.
2. The True/False test can be administered and scored rapidly and therefore saves time.
3. It effectively measures comprehension. The True/False type is a useful type of test, especially if the teachers will use a table of specifications, include enough items to achieve adequate content sampling and write unambiguously.
4. It is relatively easy to construct compared to other selection-type test items. The examiner does not worry to set item distracters.

### **Disadvantages of True/False Test**

1. It places central emphasis on the factual content of the executed curriculum and fails therefore to test higher-order mental processes.
2. It measures trivialities.
3. It encourages students to guess widely since there is a fifty-fifty chances of guessing the correct answer.
4. Item discrimination power is low because of a high probability of chance on the score received.



### (c) Matching Test

The matching test is a specialized form of the multiple choice item type in which a set of related premises (stems) share the same set of alternates. Two unequal lists of concepts are presented usually in columns-one column consists of the problems or premises to be answered while the other column contains answers or alternates. The examinee is presented with the two lists or columns and is required to associate or match the items from the two columns correctly.

Example:

Column A contains a list of the major tenets counselling theories while column B contains a list of theorists of counselling. For each tenet, find the most appropriate theorists in column B and write the letter of the theorist on the line preceding the question number. You may use a letter in column B. only once.

#### Column A

1. Men is rational
2. Man is basically good
3. Man is animalistic
4. Behaviour can be modified

#### column B

- a. Albert Ellis
- b. Carl Rogers
- c. Watson
- d. Freud

#### **Advantages of Matching Test**

1. They can be scored rapidly, objectively and accurately.
2. Matching items can effectively measure the lower levels of cognitive domain such as names, definition of terms,

vocabulary, dates, events, formulae and other simple relationships.

3. Many questions can be asked in a limited amount of testing time. This factor ensures adequate content sampling and other things being equal, a higher resultant reliability than would be the case with fewer questions.

#### Disadvantages of Matching Test

1. In matching type test it is hard to get a set of homogeneous premises for a common set of responses to be used. Matching becomes therefore difficult. The matching test is a useful type of selection test if the teacher ensures item clarity relevance to objectives clear directions of the use of table of specifications in the planning stage. Adequate revisions are needed before a cluster of items in a matching test is perfected.
2. The matching type cannot effectively measure higher order mental processes like knowledge, comprehension, application etc.

#### (d) The Multiple-Choice Tests

The multiple choice test involves more higher-order reasoning than is the case with the true/false test. It is however much more difficult to develop. The multiple-choice tests are considered the best most popular and most widely used objective test. These tests can be adapted to various content areas. They can be used to measure the lower order mental processes as well as the higher-order mental processes.

The multiple choice item consists of two parts the STEM which contains the premise or problem and the list of options. The incorrect responses are often called the foils or distractors, while the correct response is called the key. The stem can be stated in two basic ways-as questions or an incomplete declarative statement followed by a number of possible responses of which is clearly correct or the best answer.

EXAMPLE:

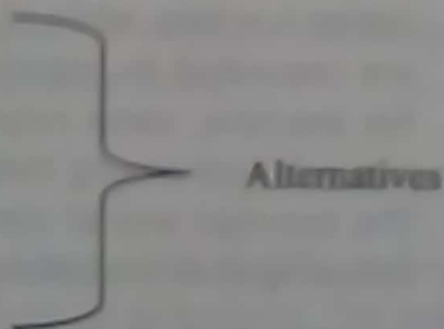
Who is the author of "Things Fall Apart"? (Stem)

(a) Earnest Emenjonu

(b) Kalm Uka

(c) Chinua Achebe

(d) Wole Soyinka



Letter 'C' is the key or correct answer while letters a, b, and d are foils or distractors. The four options are alternatives. Multiple choice formats can be varied in four different ways:

- (i) The one correct answer format in which a student selects one correct answer among several plausible answers. In this case the correct answer stands out clear as the only correct answer and there is little argument about it.
- (ii) The best answer format, in which items are highly competitive and the best answer is determined as a matter of the degree of exactness not that other options are totally wrong. Items requesting students to choose



the closest most appropriate or nearest to underlined term in English test will be good examples.

- (iii) The analogy type in which a student is expected to deduce the existing relationships between the first two parts of the items and then to apply this principles to the third and fourth items. This type of format is very suitable to non-language test of intelligence like the Raven's standard progressive matrices and other pictorial examinations.
- (iv) The reverse multiple-choice type in which all the options but one of them are correct. This is the reverse of the single correct answer variety because in this case, one option is wrong, while all others are correct. The students are requested to negatively choose the wrong answer. For example, some carpenter's tools will be listed with one odd tool among them that is not a carpenter's tool. The common way of stating this variety is "which of the following does not belong with the rest?"

### Advantages of Multiple Choice Tests

1. Multiple choice tests usually provide greater test reliability per item than other varieties of objectives tests. This is mainly due to their wide content sampling.
2. Multiple-choice items favour test-wise students and severely disadvantage to the non-test-wise students. It is thus possible for test-wise students to score marks out of proportion to their real knowledge of the content.
3. Multiple-choice items are difficult to construct. They require a thorough knowledge of the course content and skills for measuring high-order mental processes.

Furthermore, they sample a wide content of the executed curriculum and require considerable time and energy which some teachers may not be prepared to sacrifice.

4. Because of difficulty involved in writing good multiple-choice items, some teachers tend to concentrate on the True/False and sentence completion test items as an easy way out. But these two varieties of objective tests measure recall mainly and do not measure higher-order mental process.
5. They require much time from the students to respond compared to other objective tests.
6. Guessing is also a limitation in multiple choice testing but less so than with the true/false form.

### **Content Sampling**

1. Multiple choice tests can be scored rapidly, accurately and objectively even by untrained examiners. The question of examinee's personality does not come in.
2. The degree of ambiguity is far less in multiple choice items than in other types of test if items are well constructed.
3. Multiple choice tests sample a wide area of the curriculum content. Their concurrent validity and reliability are high.
4. Multiple choice tests are the most versatile and flexible of all selection-type examinations. They are the most versatile in the sense that they measure instructional objectives at all levels of the cognitive domains. These

levels are knowledge, (recall of facts), comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

5. Multiple-choice have a relatively higher scorer reliability coefficient compared to True/False items.

### Disadvantages of Multiple Choice Tests

1. The multiple choice items cannot measure an examinee's ability to organize materials or to clearly express his/her knowledge.

### 3. The Oral Test

The Oral test is a form of educational measurement in which a question is presented orally to the examinee and is responded to in like manner. The Oral test is seldom used for measurement purpose because of its inherent and structural weaknesses which will be mentioned here. It is however, used at the primary school level before writing skills are developed. It is also used at the university level of project or thesis examination and at the post school level for occupational placement in the form of interviews.

### Advantages of the Oral Test

1. It permits free response
2. It saves the students who are poor in writing and reading the embarrassment of having to perform poorly in these two areas since these two areas are not involved in the oral tests.



3. The examinee has an opportunity to ask the examiner to clarify certain ambiguities involved in the Oral questions and this paves the way for correct responses if the content is understood.
4. Like the essay examination the Oral test helps teachers to assess competence in the expression power and articulation by students.
5. As a structured interview, the Oral test enables the examiner to observe the examinee on the spot and notice the feelings, emotional expressions attitude and so on. These reactions can prove useful in affective assessment of students.
6. It taps the students' ability to understand and supply the correct response.
7. It provides immediate feedback to both, the examinee and examiner.

#### **Disadvantages of the Oral Test**

1. The Oral test has low rates reliability since there is difficulty in standardizing the Oral questions. The consistency of questioning among ratters' is unacceptably low. Many scores are needed to raise ratter reliability.
2. Since the Oral test involves one person at a time and the response is verbal, it consumes a lot of time.
3. The Oral test is in fact, a variation of the essay test and as such, involves limited sampling of the content taught.

#### 4. Performance Tests

The psychomotor domain is as the cognitive domain when one looks at the varying talents in human beings (Denga, 1987). Unfortunately, the measurement of the psychomotor domain has so far received scant emphasis from measurement experts. Performance tests therefore, constitute a significant quantum leap towards the measurement of psychomotor domain.

Performance tests are concerned "with skills, with which students can identify objects, manipulate objects, perform assigned tasks or react to real or stimulated situations" (Marshall and Hales, 1971). These skills can be measured in physical education, typing, laboratory skills in science subjects such as chemistry, physics and languages like French and English.

Performance tests are particularly important in early primary school years during which most children have not developed the reading skills to take most paper and pencil tests (Denga, 1987). They are only getting ready for complex school activities. It will thus be useful to administer performance tests in dancing, singing, drawing, painting and so on. These skills can progressively develop into more sophisticated manipulative skills in the area of typing, carpentry, simulated situations, drama, and other vocational skills like welding, machining, automobile repairs etc. The performance test is thus particularly suited in the context of the 6-3-3-4 system of education whose main thrust is vocational training for the use of the head and hand.

The scales to be used in performance test include:

i. Quantitative Scale

ii. Qualitative Scales

iii. Status scales

iv. Product Scales and

v. Descriptive Scales

**Quantitative Scales:** These types of scales are scored in terms of the frequency of occurrence of some specified behaviour or action. The behaviour is observed and its frequency recorded by the examiner. The Yes/No scale may be used to record behaviour when observed.

**Qualitative Scales:** these scales are scored in terms of absolute "goodness" or quality of the given behaviour. A criterion for goodness is established to judge the performance. The scale can be divided into good, average and poor.

**Status Scale:** are scored in terms of the goodness of the given behaviour in relation to specified reference or normative group. In the case, an external reference is required and not just internal criteria like the case of quantitative scales. Like qualitative scales, these scales can be sub-divided into categories like Excellent, Good, Above average, Average, Poor, etc.

**Product Scale:** are used as a criterion for scoring a students' performance. A teacher constructs a product scale by selecting from products of previous students, a series of products distributed along a quality consortium ranging from very poor to very good or excellent. Handwriting is an important product activity in early school years.



Descriptive Scale; are scored by checking the statements which best characterize the examinee. The behaviours are listed and the examinee's performance on them is described accordingly.

Thus, performance tests are a useful addition to the conventional tests. If well constructed, they will assist in measuring manipulative and other performance skills at all levels in school and outside the school.

References

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