

**DEVELOPMENT TESTS IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM.**

**BY**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Educationists and educators within educational setting need to be accountable. They need to be precise in their educational activities to ensure optimal learning. Furthermore, they will require ways to determine if they and their learners (pupils, students) are achieving the stated objectives. Therefore the focus of this paper will be to provide readers with information primarily relating to the technical aspects of test development within various content realms of the social studies. Furthermore, to identify rationales for testing from the various conflicting points thereby providing a frame of work for better testing.

**TESTING WITHIN EVALUATION**

A look into various articles reveals the words “how to”. But in this writing, before we could address the issue of “how” of test design which is very crucial, we shall contemplate testing from a Macro view so as to locate the concept of testing within evaluation.

Up until the 1960s, the concept of evaluation within educational circle was primarily a synonym for testing. However, since that time, there has existed a demand for greater precision in the use of the terminology. Merwin (1969) has indicated that the concepts of evaluation have been adjusted as educators considers who or what should be evaluated, who would accomplish the evaluations, the manner for conducting such evaluation, and finally, how evaluation should be incorporated into the total educational process. These are some of the questions with which we still have to deal with in the realms of social studies.

Cronback (1972) has defined evaluation “as the collection and use of information to make decision about an educational program”. While sufflebeam etal (1971) defined evaluation “as the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives”. We could therefore state that evaluation really is a collective term for all those ways available for abstaining feedback’s regarding one’s actions or the actions of others for the purpose of adjusting or maintaining such actions. From this point of view, evaluation as a concept is diversified. It is part of all stages of curriculum planning and implementation. Within the classroom, it includes means such as observations of pupils, interviews by teachers and specialists, critiques, self analysis using audio and video tapes, as well as paper and



pencil tests. One major problem of keeping evaluation, and testing correctly identified is that, we have over utilised the use of paper - and pencil test as the sole means of evaluation.

At this point, we need to state that testing is a component of evaluation, a component which involves the use of a particular grouping of instruments and/or procedures: so, testing needs to be considered in a macro view of evaluation in social studies. It needs to be considered as only one means for obtaining feedback as to the effectiveness of functioning of both the teacher and students within the social studies arena. Therefore, proper evaluation program requires a well conceived and developed test which is not a simple task, this will demand detailed knowledge of the mechanics of test design, comprehension of various types of tests, understanding of the several types of questions format, and competence in the various types of cognitive and affective questions.

### **FEATURES OF SATISFACTORY TESTS: EXPLANATION OF CONCEPTS**

Any teacher, or educator concerned with creating tests needs to ascertain if the test will objectively measure what he or she wants to measure, and if it will measure this phenomenon if the test is given repeatedly. These questions relate to the concepts of validity and reliability of test items.

In this section of the paper, we shall focus on such concepts as: content validity, reliability, usability educational criterion measures and types of questions within the social studies arena.

Concept validity is very important to a test item or test, for it appraises whether the exercise assesses what it is assumed to be measuring. According to Kerlinger (1965) content validity is concerned with the representatives or sampling adequacy of the content of the items. He, therefore states that content validation is guided by the question "Is the substance or content of this measure representative of the content or the universe of content of the property being measured?".

Kerlinger (1965) defined reliability as a process which relates to the accuracy or precision of a measuring instrument, This implies that, is the instrument dependable? If the instrument, the test, is administered a second time, will it measure the same phenomena? Therefore, within the realms of evaluation reliability deals with the amount of error present in a test. The greater the error the more unreliable; the less the error, the greater the reliability. The procedures for determining validity and reliability is beyond the scope of this paper, but we must emphasis that one must consider these two concepts when either creating or using a test.

Another feature of a good test is usability. This simply refers to whether the test or item can be easily used by both the teacher and students. Factors such as, time required to construct, administer and interpret the test are usually put into consideration. Furthermore, consideration is also given to such factors as to the readability level and appropriateness of examples of test items by students. This implies that we need to be careful of example and wordings of particular test items if not they may not be usable to the group of students.

Educational criterion measure, within the realm of evaluation are concepts which need to be understood while constructing tests. We need to understand that tests are developed to provide teachers and students with information as to whether their behaviours relate to both teaching and learning have been productive. Therefore to measure teaching and learning results, we shall need criterion measures. According to



Baker and Schutz (1971) a criterion measure "must reflect learner behaviour that results from instruction. It centres in students' behaviour, although the prepotiousness of the teacher's behaviour also is implicitly considered". Therefore criterion measures focus on those things which reflect a truthful indication of the effectiveness of some aspects of the educational program. So, criterion measures can be employed in both formative and summative evaluation schemes.

Baker and Schutz (1971) have presented a useful classification of criterion measure. According to them, criterion measures can relate to both learner behaviour and learner product: learner behaviour relate to those things which students do or say in response to a particular situation. These behaviours must be recorded by an external agent. Therefore, a learner behaviour in social studies that we might wish to measure is learner "concern" for fellow students. A test "check sheet" incorporating some types of ranking might be employed to ascertain the level of student concern for others.

While learner product criterion measures range from test papers, stories, and project papers to construction projects. Emphasis is more concerned with the actual end result, rather than with the means by which the products were produced.

Baker and Schutz (1971) further divide such measures according to stimulus consideration: learner behaviour under natural conditions, learner behaviour manipulated conditions. Learner behaviour under natural condition implies to those situations in which students are interacting which are not or have not been deliberately arranged by the teacher. For example, we might measure learner concern for fellow students by observing what a student does on the playground.

Learner behaviour manipulated conditions refers to those encounters which the teacher carefully creates specifically for evaluating particular student reactions, behaviour, or knowledge. For example, the educational environment has been carefully developed and structured to ensure that students will have to demonstrate their level of understanding and/or their attitudes and values. Here, the teacher might create a stimulation in class in which students would be forced to demonstrate just how much concern they had for their class colleagues.

From the above analysis, it is observable that criterion measures can be organised into these two categories: learner behaviour, natural and manipulated conditions and learner product, natural and manipulated conditions. In most of our social studies lessons, one will deal with both groupings and their corresponding subdivisions.

The last feature of satisfactory test which is of concern to us in this paper is the type and level of question items. All tests in social studies are rated to provide the teacher and/or student with feedback as to his or her success in dealing with some aspect of social studies. In this context, the quality of the feedback is dependent in part, upon the quality of questions asked in the test. It is most important to remember that one can have good objective test items or a test containing all technically perfect test items and still have a poor test. For example, in developing an objective test item, the teacher may write a clearly worded item, have believable distractors in the options, but still have a question only stressing knowledge. We are not saying that in knowledge questions are unimportant, rather, it is to indicate that in today's social studies, one should be stressing some thing in addition to knowledge of facts. Therefore, test item should adequately represent both cognitive and affective levels in a proportion parralling the goals and objectives for the social studies taught in the class.

The social studies educators or teacher should be mindful that the question is crucial to the quality of the lesson, the quality of the social studies educational experience, and the quality of the test.



### RATIONALES FOR TESTING IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES.

Within the realm of education, when queried as to our rationale for administering tests, we respond, "why, to find out how the students are doing" followed by "and to give the students marks". Basically, these types of comments represent the evaluation or "marking" or "grading" syndrome of testing. We are not adverse to utilising tests to obtain marks for students. But, this use of test is not all functioning. Further, when we only employ tests as summative evaluative devices at the end of a lesson, unit, or year, we only store information which indicates that after experiencing a portion of the total social studies curriculum, students could not answer correctly particular test items. The implication of such use of tests are that, we are not sure if the presence or lack of performance on the test is due to poor study habits, limited intellectual capacity, poor teaching methods, inappropriate curriculum, or insufficient time on topics in an inadequate educational environment. So we need to employ tests in formative evaluation as well. In doing this, we need to consider our tests as components parts in the evaluation process, and evaluation needs to be addressed to the curriculum, to the school environment, as well as to the students as learners.

From the above therefore, we can now look into possible rationales for testing in the social studies classroom.

We have already presented one reason for developing and administering a test: to create a vehicle for assisting in determining students' marks. Related to this purpose is using tests to determine the effectiveness of student learning, but not solely for a mark.

How well those the student do in reacting to a particular situation represented in a test item or situation? How well does the student apply his or her understanding of a topic to a new situation presented in the test? How effective is the student in analysing information to determine basic assumptions or strengths and weaknesses in argument? How skilled and creative is the student in synthesising information as a response to a test item? How effective is the student in applying criteria to a situation couched in a test item in order to make judgements?.

The above questions focus principally on measuring the cognitive learning of students. We need to stress that many of the most crucial learning in social studies are in the affective domain. Therefore, our tests in social studies should have portions containing questions touching on affective domain. For decades social studies education have exhorted the importance of attitudes, but we have been negligent in forming questions in tests and instructional situations designed to assess attitudes.

Tests can be used by the teacher not only to determine student success in learning particular content, but also to ascertain which aspects of the social studies curriculum are useful for the student. According to Krathwohl et al; (1964) information relating to this can result from the use of affective questions in the test dealing with levels of receiving, responding, and valuing.

Not only can the curriculum be assessed via the utilisation of tests, but the teacher also can obtain data as to the quality of the learning environment for producing particular types of learning. For example, if the teacher keeps an account of the particular way in which the classroom was organised for a certain aspect of social studies learning, then, when recording how effectively students did on those items related to this learning, the teacher can obtain some idea as to whether to maintain or adjust the classroom organisation.

Tests also indicates that students did not learn a particular bit or grouping of information, a process, an attitude, a value, or a skill. In a normal situation, tests address simultaneously several of these results of learning. We can derive more information



from tests administered if we consciously create tests which will measure not only factual knowledge, but also assess the effectiveness of the learning environment encountered, the curriculum experienced, the time provided, the instructional strategies utilised, and material employed. Therefore testing within the social studies needs to serve multiple purposes.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Whatever the test's purpose, we must be cognizant that there exist numerous rationales for testing within the social studies. The call to individualise instruction, to personalise the social studies curriculum, has been given much prominence. In this context, we therefore need to individualise and personalise the test we employ in social studies. The tests incorporated within the social studies and the reasons for their utilisation will therefore vary as our students vary, will be altered as the demands of the time shift, and will adapt as different aspects of the social studies receive emphasis and as new dimensions of the social studies are incorporated into the social studies curriculum.

Furthermore, as teachers of social studies become increasingly skilled with the domain of the question and in test development, our tests will or reflect our new knowledge and experience. Therefore, before the classroom teacher sits down to write his test item, he must ask himself a series of questions. The questions may be considered some what analogous to those in a check list used in planning standardised test items.

The two most general questions the classroom teacher must consider are:-

- (1) What do I want to do? and
- (2) What is the best way in which I can accomplish my goal?

Arising from these questions, there are series of questions which the classroom teacher should ask in the test - planning stage. They are:-

1. What is the purpose of the test? Why am I giving it?
2. What skills, knowledge, attitudes, etc.; do I want to measure?
3. Have I clearly defined my instructional objectives in terms of student behaviour?
4. Have I prepared a table of specifications?
5. Do the test items match the objectives?
6. What kind of test (*item format*) do I want to use? Why?
7. How long should the test be?
8. How difficult should the test be?
9. How would I arrange the various item format?
10. How are the test scores to be tabulated?
11. How are scores (*grades, or level of competency*) to be assigned?
12. How are the test results to be reported?

From the above questions the teacher is required to be adequately skilled in planning and in spreading out the item-writing phase over a long period of time.

Our primary focus in this paper was on the use of tests by social studies educators. However, it is becoming increasingly important for us to realise that to foster student independence in functioning, students will need to acquire competency in monitoring their own learning. Since there is much emphasis upon the autonomous

learning in social studies, the learners need to acquire skills in the utilisation of various monitoring and assessing procedures. The ability for students to be competent in “testing” themselves at significant points in their study will enable them to engage in planning their learning. It is sufficient to say therefore that when social studies educators are planning testing dimension of teaching, they must consider ways to involve students in the process both in reacting to testing and in planning their testing.

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**BISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL GAP BETWEEN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN PARTS OF NIGERIA**

The educational system in Nigeria has been a subject of much debate and discussion. The country's educational system is a complex one, with a long history of development and change. The system is characterized by a wide range of educational institutions, from primary schools to universities, and a variety of educational programs. The system is also characterized by a high level of inequality, with the most advanced educational institutions concentrated in the north and the most basic educational institutions concentrated in the south. This inequality has led to a significant educational gap between the north and the south, which has had a profound impact on the country's development. The following is a brief overview of the historical development of the educational system in Nigeria, with a focus on the educational gap between the north and the south.

The educational system in Nigeria has a long history, dating back to the pre-colonial period. At that time, education was primarily provided by traditional Islamic schools, which were concentrated in the north. These schools provided a basic education in Arabic and Islamic studies, and were an important part of the cultural and social life of the north. In the south, education was primarily provided by traditional African schools, which were more focused on practical skills and oral traditions. These schools were also an important part of the cultural and social life of the south.

With the arrival of the British in the late 19th century, the educational system in Nigeria began to change. The British introduced a new system of education, based on the British model. This system was primarily focused on the preparation of a small number of students for entry into the civil service and other government jobs. The new system was concentrated in the north, where the British had a strong presence. In the south, the British introduced a new system of education, based on the American model. This system was primarily focused on the preparation of a small number of students for entry into the medical profession and other professions. The new system was concentrated in the south, where the British had a strong presence.

Over the years, the educational system in Nigeria has continued to evolve. The government has invested heavily in education, and the number of educational institutions has increased significantly. However, the educational gap between the north and the south has persisted. The north continues to have a higher level of educational attainment than the south, and this has led to a significant imbalance in the distribution of skilled labor and other resources. This imbalance has had a profound impact on the country's development, and it is a major challenge that the government and the people of Nigeria must address.