

## **Indigenised and Indigenous assessments in Nigeria: Opinion of teachers and students**

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### **Abstract**

Assessments involve collection of information for decision making within any context be it school or out-of-school. Within the Nigerian society assessments have tended to take western coloration following the introduction of formal education by the colonial masters. This situation no doubt would continue for a very long time to come and the use of current standard assessments have been criticised on the grounds that the culture of the assesses has most often be ignored. Just as indigenous psychology is related to ‘the values, concepts, belief systems, methodology and other resources indigenous to the specific ethnic or cultural group under study (Ho, 1998:94), so also is indigenous assessment. Thus indigenous assessments are based on cultural experiences. On the other hand efforts to indigenise assessments are geared towards making the so-called foreign assessments suitable for use in a particular locale. One may see indigenisation as making the assessments appropriate taking into consideration the characteristics of those assessed while indigenous assessments are those having a theoretical foundation based on the local conditions. In this era when reasons for poor performance in public examinations has become a recurring decimal in daily discourse the indigenisation and indigenous assessments may need to be examined with respect to how they can be applied in schools. Consequently, this study would explore the opinion of teachers and students about them as well as outline what benefits are derivable from both concepts and what can be done to obtain maximum benefit from the application of both concepts in school assessments for good results in public examinations. The study will focus on a population made of students in their second year of senior secondary school and teachers at this level from an urban location in Nigeria. A questionnaire exploring indigenized and indigenous assessments on a five point scale of strongly agree through undecided to strongly disagree would be used. Interviews would also be applied. The information collected would be analysed using means and standard deviation. The results showed differential acceptance of both assessments; indigenised were seen as most relevant for affective measures as many indigenous assessments in this area are not readily available. The recommendations made included efforts being made to produce indigenous assessment instruments.

**KEY WORDS:** Indigenous Assessment, Indigenised Assessment, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Assessment is pervasive in life and particularly in educational discourse. In education it assumes a central stage as most decisions that have to be made depends on availability of current, valid and dependable information. The decisions focus on issues related to the students, school system, school programmes and educational policy (Nitko, 1996). Within the informal and non-formal system in Nigeria assessment also plays an important role but this is usually ignored ignorantly in discussions. Nonetheless efforts to get the best out of education must give the needed impetus to assessment. Without it one may not be sure whether the expectations and goals enshrined in educational programmes are being met. It is as a result that assessment has continued to be emphasised in education.

Testing which is one way of collecting assessment information has been with us for a long time. Most often it is traced to the Chinese Imperial System and the humble beginnings there have had extensive influence on assessment in Britain and indeed Nigeria one of its former colonies. Contemporary assessments worldwide have been seen to be objective, behaviour-based constructs and represented as scales and quantitative descriptions. Cheung (2010) further indicated that interest is in the psychometric characteristics of the measures, standardization of administration and scoring, normative reference and validation processes. These assessments have mainly been cross-cultural to the extent that they are used across national boundaries and languages. For them to be so used has necessitated standardization of translated instruments, use of local and original norms and cross-cultural differences in means and distribution of scores and interpretations. Through this approach assessment instruments which are alien are made usable in areas they were not originally produced for. This may be seen as a form of indigenization of assessments (Cheung, 2010).

In Asia Filipino psychologists were the first to champion the cause of indigenization (Ho, 1998). It has also gotten a node from psychologist in the west (Ho, Peng, Lai & Chan). Following an upsurge in this interest in recent years, indigenous assessment has also become a front burner in assessment terrain. Just as psychology theories have been seen to be influenced by the contextual situations, assessment has also been seen as something which is greatly influenced by the local conditions where it is developed. Thus indigenous assessment is seen as an attempt to produce a local assessment within a specific local context. This it is opined would open-up the assessment domain and improve and invigorate it. Lots of efforts have been dissipated in this area particularly in the assessment of personality. In particular, studies in this area seem to agree that this approach enriches understanding of the cultural meaning of personality patterns and increase the prediction of outcomes in the local contexts (Allwood & Berry, 2006).

In Nigeria assessment has involved the use of both indigenous and indigenized assessments. Early assessment instruments used have been mainly of the indigenized types (e.g. Standard progressive matrices) but with the growth in human capacity in psychology and assessments, indigenous assessments are now a common place (e.g. Study Habits Inventory (Bakare, 1977a), Student Problem Inventory (Bakare,1977b), Adolescent Personal

Data Inventory (Akinboye, n.d). These assessment scales have been developed with the conventional approaches of rationale-theoretical, empirical and factor analytic. What is noticed from the coexistence of both assessments is that the options open in the construction had involved translation of scale, adaption and construction of a new scale. These scales have been applied in research, diagnosis and assessment that is school-based. Other assessments that have been used as part of school-based assessment are achievement tests, personality, values, interest, interviews, and observation among others. Which of these can be indigenised and which should be strictly indigenous. What principles should be utilised in assessment as part of school-based assessment? The major players in this regard should provide the answers to these questions.

### **Research Questions**

Consequent on the foregoing, the research questions addressed in this study include:

1. Which assessments are perceived by teachers and students to be amenable to indigenization and which should be indigenous?
2. Are indigenous and indigenized assessments perceived by teachers and students as applicable in public examinations?
3. What characteristic features or principles should assessments whether indigenous or indigenized follow?

### **Methodology**

This study is exploratory as it attempts to map out the opinion about indigenisation and indigenous assessments. The population is composed of teachers and students in secondary schools in Benin City, Nigeria. A sample of 200 teachers and 500 students was selected as part of the study.

The instruments utilised were a questionnaire and interview of ten teachers and fifteen students. The focus was on utilisation of indigenous and indigenised assessments as part of school-based assessments. The questionnaire was captioned ‘Teachers and Students Opinion of Indigenized and Indigenous Assessment’. This instrument was generated based on information generated from focus group interviews with five teachers and another with ten students and collective personal and professional experiences, information from literature, informal interviews with lecturers in a Nigerian university and researchers’ knowledge of indigenous and indigenised assessments. The questionnaire was composed of three sections. The first section requested respondents to indicate their status: teacher or student. The second section was composed of a preamble indicating the meaning of the concepts of indigenous and indigenized as applicable in assessment. Thereafter, respondents were to indicate which of assessments used as part of school-based assessments can be subjected to indigenization or are purely indigenous. The third section contained items on the features of indigenous

assessments and respondents were expected to respond on a five point scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

Data gathering was done by four postgraduate students trained as research assistants. The responses to the positive items were scored using the transformation: Strongly Agree =5, Agree =4, Undecided =3, Disagree =2 and Strongly =1 Disagree. Frequencies were utilised in analysing responses to items in the first two sections. In addition means and standard deviations were computed for each item in the last section and an interpretative norm was utilised in deciding on the opinion held by the respondents. A mean of 2.51 was indicative of acceptance of the issue raised; otherwise it is a rejection of the issue.

### **Results and discussion**

The results from this study showed a return rate of 187 questionnaires for teachers and 470 questionnaires for students which are usable; that is 93.5% and 94.0% respectively. These were considered high enough to yield information that is generalizable.

### Assessments that should be indigenised or be indigenous

The assessment practices which have been found useful as part of the school testing programme in Nigeria that the teachers and students indicated that can be indigenized and indigenous are indicated in table 1.

**Table 1: Frequency distribution of perception of teachers and students of assessments that can be indigenous and indigenised**

Assessment	Indigenous		Indigenized	
	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students
<b>Test:</b>				
• Achievement	187 (100)*	470 (100)	0 (0)	60 (12.8)
• Personality	100 (53.5)	50 (10.6)	183(97.9)	300 (63.8)
• Intelligence	160 (85.6)	450 (95.7)	150 (80.2)	257 (54.7)
• Value	144 (77.0)	97 (20.6)	50 (26.3)	92 (19.6)
• Interest	176 (94.1)	87 (18.5)	108 (57.8)	51 (10.9)
Projects	187 (100)	470 (100)	176 (94.1)	300 (63.8)
Assignments	185 (98.9)	456 (97.0)	56 (29.9)	306 (65.1)
Observation	187 (100)	308 (65.5)	150 (80.2)	209 (44.5)
Rating Scales	176 (94.1)	400 (85.1)	98 (52.4)	300 (63.8)
Interviews	169 (90.4)	390 (83.0)	89 (47.6)	350 (74.5)
Questionnaires	187 (100)	470 (100)	187 (100)	360 (76.6)

\*Figures in brackets are percentages

The table shows the frequency of respondents who felt the respective assessments can be indigenised or which could be indigenous. All teachers are of the opinion that achievement tests, projects, observation and questionnaires should be fully indigenous. All other assessments were indicated by between 53.5 and 98.9% to be assessments which can be indigenous. This tends to show that the teachers under study feel quite comfortable when it comes to possibly constructing the assessments under study. Based on these results the construction of personality tests may need to be given greater focus if they are to be used as part of the school assessment programme. This is supported by the fact that 97.9% of the teachers believe that personality tests can be indigenised. The indigenisation of value tests, assignment and interview was supported by less than 50% of the teachers. This is understandable as values may be culture specific and assignments and interview should focus on what is being taught and challenges as applicable within the classroom situation.

Unfortunately, studies conducted in Nigeria (Osunde & Ughamadu, 2004); Mgbor & Mgbor, 2004) indicate that teachers cannot construct these kinds of instruments. Therefore there is need to expose teachers to constructing these type of assessments.

The responses of the students are equally instructive. Some believe that achievement tests can be indigenised which may be as a result of some of the books available in the market being of foreign origin or because some the books are Nigerianised versions of books earlier published off-shore. Responses to other items are indeed similar to those of the teachers.

### **Applicability of indigenous and indigenised assessments in public examinations**

On the issue of applicability of indigenous and indigenised assessments in public examinations, both teachers and students opined that the issue of indigenisation would hardly arise as the examination is expected to focus on an outlined syllabus for the examination. In particular, a teacher puts it this way:

*You can't be focusing on a student's ability to display his/her knowledge on Nigerian history and expect to export a test from US or UK. This would be a burden for the teacher to further tailor the test to the local needs. Such a situation would be a wastage of efforts and acceptance of perpetual colonialism. Indigenization should be encouraged in difficult subjects for which the teachers may not be available. This is not the case in present day Nigeria.*

They however subscribe to using indigenised assessments in gathering data for school-based assessments in the affective area. This according to them is as a result of the paucity of such instruments and the teachers' poor knowledge base in constructing them. To ameliorate this ugly trend another teacher puts it this way:

*We have reached a situation that we can stand on our own. University lecturers in this country should stand up to the challenge. They cannot continue to pontificate; they must come to the level of teachers and help them to deliver.*

On the part of students the consensus was that if teachers are really teachers they should use assessments developed by themselves taking into consideration the type of questions set by Public examination bodies like the National Examinations Council and the West African Examinations Council.

## Principles of indigenised and indigenous assessments

This section presents responses on principles of assessment as perceived by teachers and students. Indigenous assessment is focused on in this section as this has been seen by both students and teachers as most relevant as part of school-based assessments. Table 2 contains the means and standard deviation of some of the principles. From the table it is realised that

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of some principles of indigenous assessments**

Principles of indigenous assessments	Teachers		Students	
	Mean	s.d	Mean	s.d
Assessment should be in tandem with language of instruction.	3.39	.77	3.21	1.20
Assessment provides evidence of progress in locally valued knowledge, skills and dispositions.	2.97	1.01	3.12	.87
Indigenous assessments are culturally appropriate.	2.91	1.06	3.24	.41
Priority is placed on individual growth in indigenous assessment.	3.44	.79	3.65	.19
Internalization of standards of excellence emphasized.	3.52	.76	2.65	1.32
Assessment looks for particular attributes, contributions and potentials of the individuals or groups assessed.	3.45	.80	3.90	1.20
Diligent efforts are recognised.	3.48	.76	2.99	.67
Emphasis is on engagement as well as application of knowledge and skills in authentic ways.	3.24	.85	4.00	.13
Creation of shared memory and clear expectations that increase understanding and build relationships between teachers and learners.	3.30	.87	3.65	.29
Students' strengths are identified and supported to build on them.	3.41	.86	4.03	1.00
All dimensions of the learners' development- physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual are emphasised.	3.44	.91	3.54	.26
Link between knowledge assessed, learners past experience and future path of the learner are of interest.	3.10	.88	3.58	.59
Community is able to control the interpretation of research.	3.09	.74	2.80	.29
Community dictates how findings are reported within the community and beyond.	3.14	.70	3.02	.93
Teachers should be aware of the principles and where possible bring assessment practices in line with them.	3.39	.67	4.05	1.03

both students and teachers accept the principles examined in this study. For the teachers the most important principles emanating from the mean scores are 'Internalization of standards of excellence emphasized', 'Diligent efforts are recognised', 'Assessment looks for particular attributes, contributions and potentials of the individuals or groups assessed', 'All dimensions of the learners' development- physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual are emphasised', and 'Priority is placed on individual growth in indigenous assessment'. These results are in complete agreement with the principles as outlined in the policy documents for implementing

continuous assessment. Thus one can categorically state that teachers are aware and have possibly internalized the core values of the programme.

For the students the most important principles include: 'Teachers should be aware of the principles and where possible bring assessment practices in line with them', 'Students' strengths are identified and supported to build on them', 'Emphasis is on engagement as well as application of knowledge and skills in authentic ways', 'Assessment looks for particular attributes, contributions and potentials of the individuals or groups assessed', and 'Creation of shared memory and clear expectations that increase understanding and build relationships between teachers and learners'. These again are worthwhile expectations that can enhance learning within the classroom.

The standard deviations showed the variability of the responses. For example the item that stated that 'assessments should be in tandem with the language of instruction' the standard deviation for students was larger than that of teachers. This may not be unconnected with the multiplicity of languages within schools which makes it impossible to use one local language. With the item 'Priority is placed on individual growth in indigenous assessment' variability of students' responses is smaller than that of teachers. This can be attributed to the principle of self care that students require as against that of burden of trying to take care of each student by teachers.

In Nigeria there has been great outcry as regards the performance of the students in public examinations. Is it that teachers have not put into practice what has been learnt? Have students not made conscious efforts to work hard to excel in these examinations? Would one say that societal expectations and craze for paper qualifications have led to this gap in what is and the expectations? These are questions requiring detailed attention. Nonetheless experience shows that some factors within the assessment domain may have contributed to this poor outing by students.

According to Okpala, Afemikhe & Anyanwu (2011) the phenomenon of 'miracle centres, may have exacerbated this situation and therefore efforts must be put in place to use assessment principles here clearly delineated to chart a course of action. It is hoped that with proper utilization of the few indigenous affective scales available in Nigeria, assessment information can be used to guide students learning efforts to effectively perform in public examinations. Herein, so it seems, is the modest contribution of this paper.

## **Conclusion**

Indigenous and indigenized assessments are complementary tools which can be applied in the educational system. In Nigeria, indigenous assessment instruments abound particularly for the measurement of cognitive outcomes; there is no doubt in this regard as both teachers and students accept this fact. Indigenized assessments were most seen as relevant in the areas of personality assessment. The principles as applicable to assessments in schools were mainly those which emphasise the development of the whole being and hinge teaching and learning on learners' past experiences and future path. Expectations are that with application of the principles outlined by both teachers and students, the performance of students in public examinations may be enhanced.

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