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## ASSESSMENT OF GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS' UTILISATION OF EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS IN GRADING STUDENTS

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### Abstract

*The study assessed geography teachers' utilisation of evaluation instruments in grading students. Using multistage sampling procedure, eighty-six teachers who teach senior secondary classes two and three were randomly selected from sixty-five schools in 13 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. Data were analysed using descriptive (frequency counts and percentages) and t-test statistics. Results indicate that geography teachers adopt the essay type of questions and a combination of essay and objective tests in that order to grade students. Other evaluation instruments used and listed in order of utilisation are practical work, submitted homework, students' notes, multiple choice and oral tests. Evaluation instruments that encourage higher thinking such as projects and practical tests are never or less often used respectively. In terms of group differences in the utilisation of these instruments, findings indicate that utilisation of the essay type of test is sensitive to teacher experience and professional status. This implies that teachers with less experience (1-5years) and those with professional training use essay type of tests more frequently. Also, male teachers utilise more practical work whereas female teachers utilise students' notes in grading students. It was recommended that teachers should be exposed to training and re-training programmes in modern trends of evaluation.*

**Key words:** Utilisation, Essay questions, Geography, Assessment, Teacher factors

### Background

Assessment and evaluation are integral parts of the teaching and learning process since at every level of education, students are subjected to one form of examination or another. Though assessment and evaluation are distinct entities, they are related activities of the school system. Assessment fashions the information obtained from various sources into interpretable forms (Okpala & Onocha, 1994). This is used for gauging students' progress in the system and, according to Falaye (2005), the teacher makes valid judgement on the worth of the mark or grade obtained (evaluation). Under the school system, attention is paid to the three domains of learning. In the evaluation of geographic education, the cognitive and the psychomotor domains of learning where students are assessed on knowledge, intellectual skills and performance in their pursuit of education at various levels take preeminence over the affective domain. The success of the learner

at one level of education, to a large extent, determines the rate of transition to the next higher level or retention at the same level. Thus, assessment of outcomes of learning serves the function of promotion, classification and identification of learners' competence and proficiency in the content area that is being measured.

Evaluation of teaching involves collecting evidence from various stakeholders for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. A successful evaluation should generate outcomes that are valid and reliable apart from indicating directions and actions for improvement. The evaluation process can facilitate students' learning in various ways. First, evaluation can clarify instructional objectives for both the teacher and the students. Second, the evaluation instruments can provide the students with the operational definition of how the objectives of instruction are to be achieved. Besides, a good teacher should be able to use evaluation systematically to assess various phases of instruction and learners' performance (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2006). Because outcomes of learning are sometimes used for taking high-stake decisions on learners' progress, the measures obtained should be with the right instruments. The evaluation instruments used in collecting the data to make the judgement of whether learners should proceed or be retained must be valid and reliable.

The main function of evaluation in teaching is the improvement of students learning. Therefore, there is the need for proper planning and identification of all important behavioural objectives of instruction which should be defined in clear, specific and measurable terms and should be evaluation related. Ideally, classroom evaluation should be planned at the same time instructional objectives are being formulated as this increases the likelihood that the desired learning outcomes are clearly defined before the onset of instruction. To confirm the facts above, Ajala (2005), discussing the dual relationship between instruction and evaluation, asserts that good teaching is impossible without planned evaluation, since the quality of instruction depends on the quality of evaluation intended. He stressed further that evaluation of specified learning outcomes and assignment of responsibility for learning success and failure are essential professional competencies. Such an evaluation will not only help assign responsibility for specific learning outcomes, but should also result in improvement of learning instructions.

Evaluation in the cognitive domain requires the measurement of different cognitive skills such as knowledge, comprehension, application and analysis (Obemeata, 2000; Onibokun, 1999). According to Okpala and Onocha (1994), evaluation is interested in the process used in gathering any information on which judgement is based. Therefore the expectation is that teachers should employ various evaluation instruments to measure outcomes of learning. Different instruments that are simple or complex could be used by the teacher to assess curricula content depending on the purpose of the assessment or the importance of the decision to be made based on the outcome of the results. Though Okpala, Onocha and Oyedeji (1993) offered a comprehensive list of evaluation instruments covering the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, the instruments (tools) of interest in this study focus on the

evaluation of cognitive and psychomotor domain. These are: multiple choice tests, essay tests, a combination of multiple choice and essay tests, practical work, submitted homework, students' project and students' notes. To achieve effectiveness, each of these instruments must undergo proper construction processes and/or have the criteria for assessment properly planned and documented and made available to the teachers and learners so as to enable them monitor the progress of learning. In addition, their proper utilisation should ensure that an accurate picture of the students' total achievement is obtained.

Previous studies tend to suggest that assessment strategies have direct impact on students' learning. The import of these findings is that the mode of assessment employed by the teacher determines students' learning approaches whether, 'surface' or 'deep' learning (Lee, 1994). While the over-reliance on traditional pencil-and-paper tests tends to encourage memorisation which leads to the employment of surface approaches to learning, assessment forms that measure higher-order thinking have been found to be associated with deep learning approaches. The use of projects and practical work in geography for instance can be classified as belonging to the class of portfolios used in students' evaluation. They do not only enhance learning, but could develop better articulation of thoughts, organisational and reporting skills. Besides, observation and data collection skills are developed while the ability to take alternative and reasoned decisions, as well as make inferences is enhanced in the students. The exhibition of these skills reduces over dependence on the teacher for learning and enhances student's self-learning. One benefit of measuring higher cognitive domains is that it is possible to assess a variety of outcomes. Also, students' interest and motivation are arrested and sustained when they observe that some assessment tasks are real and natural.

Scholars such as Obemeata (2003) contend that quality teachers determine quality schools and invariably influence students' achievement. Other studies like Oni (1992) and Adepoju (2002), revealed that teacher characteristics such as experience and qualification along with age and location, influence students' achievement. The poor performance in secondary school geography has continued to generate concern among educators. In trying to find solution to the problem, previous studies, for instance, Okwilagwe (2011) positing that geography teachers' awareness and utilisation of motivational strategies could boost students' achievement in the subject found that teachers' awareness of these strategies did not translate to utilisation and so, did not significantly influence students' achievement in the subject. The amount of learning that goes on in geography classrooms is becoming worrisome. It has become imperative to continue to seek ways to arrest the problem of poor student academic performance. As highlighted in this work, research evidences have linked teachers' methods of evaluation to the type of learning strategies adopted by students.

In the light of the foregoing, this study sets out to assess geography teachers' utilisation of evaluation instruments with a view to providing insight to the depth of learning that is undertaken by students at the senior secondary school level classrooms in Nigeria.



## Research Questions

1. How often do teachers utilise evaluation instruments in grading students in geography?
2. Is there any significant group difference (based on gender, teaching experience and professional status) in teachers' utilisation of the evaluation instruments?

## Methodology

### Research Type

The study is a non-experimental research where teachers' utilisation of evaluation instruments were assessed and explained in terms of the teacher characteristics.

### Sampling Procedure and Sample

The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in the study. Two states were randomly picked from the country's existing geopolitical zones. From each selected state, five secondary schools were randomly selected and one SS2 and SS3 geography teacher selected per school to participate in the study. A total of 86 geography teachers finally constituted the study sample.

### Instrumentation

The Scale of Utilisation of Evaluation Instrument (SUEI) was adopted from the 'How Nigerian Children Learn' study conducted by the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan for the World Bank in 2002. It consisted of various types of evaluation instrument such as; use of essay, multiple choice, oral questions and projects. The teachers were asked to report how after they used these instruments during evaluation. The test-re-test reliability method using 30 teachers to establish the consistency of their responses, yielded a reliability value of 0.95.

### Analysis

Descriptive (frequency counts and percentages) and inferential statistics (t-test) were used to analyse the data collected.

### Results

The result of the teachers' extent of utilisation of evaluation instruments is presented in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the 73.3% and 52.3% of the geography teachers respectively often use the essay type of questions and multiple choice and essay questions. Practical work is sometimes used by 62% of the teachers, multiple choice tests and students' notes by 57% of them, submitted homework by 55% of them and oral tests 44.2% of them. The table also shows that students' projects are never used by 46.5% of these teachers.

**Table 1: Extent of Utilisation of Evaluation Instruments by Geography Teachers**

Evaluation Instrument	Often		Sometimes		Never	
		%age		%age		%age
Multiple choice tests	37	43.0	49	57.0	-	-
Essay type of questions	63	73.3	23	26.7	-	-
Multiple choice and essay questions	45	52.3	41	47.7	-	-
Oral tests	21	24.4	38	44.2	27	31.4
Practical work	27	31.4	53	61.6	6	7.0
Submitted homework	36	41.9	47	54.7	3	3.5
Students' projects	8	9.3	38	44.2	40	46.5
Students' notes	36	41.9	49	57.0	1	1.2

Table 2a shows the result of geography teachers' utilisation of evaluation instrument by teaching experience. As presented in the table only the use of essay type of questions was significant between teachers with less than 5 years and above teaching experience at ( $t=2.198, p0.05$ ). All the other types of evaluation instruments were not significant.

**Table 2a: Teachers' Utilisation of Evaluation Instruments by Teaching Experience**

Evaluation Instrument	Years of Teaching Experience	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig.	Remark
Multiple choice tests	Below 5 yrs	35	2.42	0.50	0.025	84	0.98	NS
	6yrs & above	51	2.43	0.50				
Essay type of questions	Below 5 yrs	35	2.86	0.36	2.198	84	0.031	*
	6yrs & above	51	2.64	0.48				
Multiple choice and easy questions	Below 5 yrs	35	2.57	0.50	0.735	84	0.465	NS
	6yrs & above	51	2.49	0.50				
Oral tests	Below 5 yrs	35	1.94	0.68	0.129	84	0.88	NS
	6yrs & above	51	1.92	0.79				
Practical work	Below 5 yrs	35	2.22	0.54	0.208	84	0.835	NS
	6yrs & above	51	2.25	0.59				
Submitted homework	Below 5 yrs	35	2.45	0.50	1.013	84	0.314	NS
	6yrs & above	51	2.33	0.59				
Students' projects	Below 5 yrs	35	1.63	0.55	0.008	84	0.994	NS
	6yrs & above	51	1.62	0.72				
Students' notes	Below 5 yrs	35	2.31	0.52	1.384	84	0.17	NS
	6yrs & above	51	2.47	0.50				

\* Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$

Table 2b which presents the teachers' utilisation of evaluation instruments in terms of professional status, shows that only the use of essay type of questions was significant between teachers with professional status (professionally qualified) and those who do not have this qualification. The utilisation of other evaluation instruments among these teachers was not significant.

**Table 2b: Teachers' Utilisation of Evaluation Instruments by Professional Status**

Evaluation Instrument	Professional Status	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig.	Remark
Multiple choice tests	Professional	54	2.46	0.50	0.79	84	0.43	NS
	Non-Professional	32	2.37	0.49				
Essay type of questions	Professional	54	2.80	0.41	2.75	84	0.002	*
	Non-Professional	32	2.62	0.49				
Multiple choice and easy questions	Professional	54	2.56	0.50	0.77	84	0.44	NS
	Non-Professional	32	2.47	0.51				
Oral tests	Professional	54	2.04	0.73	1.74	84	0.08	NS
	Non-Professional	32	1.75	0.76				
Practical work	Professional	54	2.24	0.55	0.72	84	0.94	NS
	Non-Professional	32	2.25	0.62				
Submitted homework	Professional	54	2.37	0.56	0.29	84	0.78	NS
	Non-Professional	32	2.41	0.56				
Students' projects	Professional	54	1.67	0.58	0.71	84	0.48	NS
	Non-Professional	32	1.56	0.76				
Students' notes	Professional	54	2.43	0.54	0.44	84	0.66	NS
	Non-Professional	32	2.38	0.49				

\* Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$

Table 2c presents the result of teachers' utilisation of evaluation instruments by gender. The table reveals that the way male and female teachers utilise submitted homework and students' notes were statistically significant at ( $t=2.43$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ); and ( $t=1.97$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) respectively. The use of the other instruments was not significantly different.

**Table 2c: Teachers' Utilisation of Evaluation Instruments by Gender**

Evaluation Instrument	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig.	Remark																																																																																						
Multiple choice tests	Male	70	2.43	0.49	0.06	84	0.95	NS																																																																																						
	Female	16	2.44	0.51					Essay type of questions	Male	70	2.70	0.46	1.43	84	0.16	NS	Female	16	2.87	0.34	Multiple choice and easy questions	Male	70	2.53	0.50	0.20	84	0.84	NS	Female	16	2.50	0.51	Oral tests	Male	70	1.91	0.74	0.41	84	0.68	NS	Female	16	2.00	0.82	Practical work	Male	70	2.25	0.61	2.43	84	0.02	*	Female	16	2.08	0.40	Submitted homework	Male	70	2.35	0.57	0.93	84	0.36	NS	Female	16	2.50	0.51	Students' projects	Male	70	1.66	0.68	0.87	84	0.39	NS	Female	16	1.50	0.52	Students' notes	Male	70	2.39	0.52	1.97	84	0.04
Essay type of questions	Male	70	2.70	0.46	1.43	84	0.16	NS																																																																																						
	Female	16	2.87	0.34					Multiple choice and easy questions	Male	70	2.53	0.50	0.20	84	0.84	NS	Female	16	2.50	0.51	Oral tests	Male	70	1.91	0.74	0.41	84	0.68	NS	Female	16	2.00	0.82	Practical work	Male	70	2.25	0.61	2.43	84	0.02	*	Female	16	2.08	0.40	Submitted homework	Male	70	2.35	0.57	0.93	84	0.36	NS	Female	16	2.50	0.51	Students' projects	Male	70	1.66	0.68	0.87	84	0.39	NS	Female	16	1.50	0.52	Students' notes	Male	70	2.39	0.52	1.97	84	0.04	*	Female	16	2.50	0.52								
Multiple choice and easy questions	Male	70	2.53	0.50	0.20	84	0.84	NS																																																																																						
	Female	16	2.50	0.51					Oral tests	Male	70	1.91	0.74	0.41	84	0.68	NS	Female	16	2.00	0.82	Practical work	Male	70	2.25	0.61	2.43	84	0.02	*	Female	16	2.08	0.40	Submitted homework	Male	70	2.35	0.57	0.93	84	0.36	NS	Female	16	2.50	0.51	Students' projects	Male	70	1.66	0.68	0.87	84	0.39	NS	Female	16	1.50	0.52	Students' notes	Male	70	2.39	0.52	1.97	84	0.04	*	Female	16	2.50	0.52																					
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Students' projects	Male	70	1.66	0.68	0.87	84	0.39	NS																																																																																						
	Female	16	1.50	0.52					Students' notes	Male	70	2.39	0.52	1.97	84	0.04	*	Female	16	2.50	0.52																																																																									
Students' notes	Male	70	2.39	0.52	1.97	84	0.04	*																																																																																						
	Female	16	2.50	0.52																																																																																										

\* Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$

### Discussion

The findings of this study is that geography teachers in Nigerian secondary schools tend to use essay type of questions and a combination of the essay and multiple choice types of questions more frequently. Though these teachers sometimes use practical work, submitted homework, students' notes, multiple choice tests and oral tests they hardly use students' projects. The study findings also indicate that teacher utilisation of essay type of test is sensitive to teacher teaching experience and professional status, whereas practical work and students' notes were sensitive to teacher gender. These findings imply that younger experienced teachers of between 1-5 years of teaching with a higher mean score of  $\bar{x} = 2.86$  and  $S.D. = 0.36$  utilise essay tests more frequently than teachers with 6 years and above teaching experience  $\bar{x} = 2.64$  and  $S.D. = 0.48$ . Teachers with professional training in pedagogy also utilise essay tests more often than those without professional training in evaluating students' work. In terms of gender, male teachers utilise practical work more frequently than female teachers whereas the female teachers tended to utilise more frequently students' notes than males in grading students.

These findings tend to agree with test construction experts' views that essay tests are less difficult to construct than multiple choice tests (Obemeta, 2000). Identification of plausible distracters in multiple choice test construction is not a mean activity for an untrained evaluator. Little wonder that geography teachers find the use of essay types of tests popular in grading students. The fact that the use of project work is not very popular among geography teachers and not many of them regularly use practical assignments are

indications of over-reliance of teachers on pencil and paper or pen and paper tests. These are evaluation practices which tend to encourage the development of memorization and regurgitation of learnt materials in students. It, also, goes to show that the teachers are deficient in the use of alternative evaluation instruments. These findings find support in the works of Odinko and Osokoya (2004), Okwilagwe and Falaye (2005), and Utoh (2006) who reported that school teachers indicated as their areas of need the construction and utilisation of evaluation instruments in grading students.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The observation in this study is that essay type of questions and a combination of multiple choice and essay tests are popular methods of grading geography students in our school system. It is an indication that the traditional methods of grading still pervade our school system. This situation portend serious dangers for the educational system if in the modern day, teacher still encourage regurgitation of learnt facts and its attendant poor studying approaches by students. Besides, their popularity among even the practicing trained professionals and teachers who are relatively inexperienced (fresh graduates) and who are expected to show ingenuity in practice is an indication of the need for the proper training of teachers in pedagogy by teacher trainers in our faculties/colleges of education. It also requires the need for re-training in current methods of evaluation by employers of labour. Teachers, irrespective of gender should be encouraged to have a paradigm shift from strategies that encourage surface to deep approaches of learning. Nigerian education systems can begin this break away by sensitizing teachers on other better alternative instruments of evaluating students such as the use of practical assignments, projects among others.

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