

PLANNING AND ADMINISTERING CLASSROOM TESTS

Planning a Test

The main objective of classroom assessment is to obtain valid, reliable and useful data regarding student learning achievement. This requires determining what is to be measured and then defining it precisely so that assessments tasks to measure desired performance can be developed. Classroom tests and assessments can be used for the following instructional objectives:

Pre-testing

Tests and assessments can be given at the beginning of an instructional unit or course to determine:-

- weather the students have the prerequisite skills needed for the instruction (readiness, motivation etc)
- to what extent the students have already achieved the objectives of planned instruction (to determine placement or modification of instruction)
 - i. During the Instruction Testing provides
 - bases for formative assessment
 - monitor learning progress
 - detect learning errors
 - provide feedback for students and teachers
 - ii. End of Instruction Testing
 - measure intended learning outcomes
 - used for formative assessment
 - provides bases for grades, promotion etc

Test Specifications

When an engineer prepares a design to construct a building and choose the materials, he intends to use in construction, he usually know what a building is going to be used for, and therefore designs it to meet the requirements of its planned inhabitants. Similarly, in testing, table of specification is the blueprint of the assessment which specifies percentages and weightage of test items and measuring constructs. It includes constructs and concepts to be measured, tentative weightage of each construct, specify number of items for each concept, and description of item types to be constructed. It is not surprising that specifications are also referred to as 'blueprints', for they are literally architectural drawings for test construction. Fulcher & Davidson (2009) divided test specifications into the following four elements:

- Item specifications: Item specifications describe the items, prompts or tasks, and any other material such as texts, diagrams, and charts which are used as stimuli. Typically, a

specification at this sub-level contains two key elements: samples of the tasks to be produced, and guiding language that details all information necessary to produce the task.

- Presentation Model: Presentation model provides information how the items and tasks are presented to the test takers.
- Assembly Model: Assembly model helps the test developer to combine test items and tasks to develop a test format.
- Delivery Model: Delivery Model tells how the actual test is delivered. It includes information regarding test administration, test security/confidentiality and time constraint.

Administering the Test

Test Assembly

We have discussed various aspects of test planning and construction. If you have written instructional objectives, constructed a test, and written items that match your objectives, then more than likely you will have a good test. All the “raw material” will be there. However, sometimes the raw material, as good as it may be, can be rendered useless because of poorly assembled and administrated test. By now you know it requires a substantial amount of time to write objectives, put together a test blueprint, and write items. It is worth a little more time to properly assemble or packages your test so that your efforts will not be wasted. Assembly of the test comprises the following steps:-

- (i) Group together all item of similar format e.g. group all essay type item or MCQ’s in one group.
- (ii) Arrange test items from easy to hard
- (iii) Space the items for easy reading
- (iv) Keep items and their options on the same page of the test
- (v) Position illustrations, tables, charts, pictures diagrams or maps near descriptions
- (vi) Answer keys must be checked carefully
- (vii) Determine how students record answers
- (viii) Provide adequate and proper space for name and date
- (ix) Test directions must be precised and clear
- (x) Test must be proofread to make it error free
- (xi) Make all the item unbiased (gender, culture, ethnic, racial etc)

Reproduction of the Test

Most test reproduction in the schools is done by photocopy machines. As you well know, the quality of such copies can vary tremendously. Regardless of how valid and reliable your test might be, poor printing/copies will not have a good impact. Take the following practical steps to ensure that time you spent constructing a valid and reliable test does not end in illegible printing.

- Manage printing of the test if test takers are large in number
- Manage photocopy from a proper/new machine
- Use good quality of the paper and printing
- Retain original test in your own custody
- Be careful while making sets of the test (staple different papers carefully)
- Manage confidentiality of the test

Administration of the Test

The test is ready. All that remains is to get the students ready and hand out the test. Here are some suggestions to help your students psychologically prepared for the test:-

- Maintain a positive attitude for achievement
- Maximize achievement motivation
- Equalize advantages to all the students
- Provide easy, comfortable and proper seats
- Provide proper system of light, temperature, air and water.
- Clarify all the rules and regulations of the examination center/hall
- Rotate distributions
- Remind the students to check their copies
- Monitor students continuously
- Minimize distraction
- Give time warnings properly
- Collect test uniformly
- Count the answer sheets, seal it in a bag and hand it over to the quarter concerned.



Test Taking Strategies

To improve test-taking skills, there are three approaches that might prove fruitful. Students need to understand the mechanics of test-taking, such as the need to carefully follow instructions, checking their work, and so forth. Second, they need to use appropriate test-taking strategies, including ways in which test items should be addressed and how to make educated guesses. Finally, they need to practice their test-taking skills to refine their abilities and to become more comfortable in testing situations. By acting upon the following strategies the students may enhance their test taking strategies:-

- Students need to follow directions carefully
- Students need to understand how to budget their time.
- Students need to check their work.
- For each item, students need to read the entire test item and all the possible answers very carefully.
- Answer the easier questions first and persist to the end of the test.
- Students need to make educated guesses.
- Use test item formats for practice.
- Review the practice items and answer choices with students.
- Practice using answer sheets.→

Steps to Prevent Cheating

Cheating is a big issue while administering tests to get reliable and valid data of students learning achievement. Following steps can be followed to prevent cheating:-

- Take special precautions to keep the test secure during preparation, storage and administration.
- Students should be provided sufficient space on their desks to work easily and to prevent use of helping material.
- If scratch paper is used have it turned in with the test.
- Testing hours must be watched carefully. Walk around the room periodically and observe the students what are they doing.
- Two forms of the tests can also be used or use some items different in the test to prevent cheating.
- Use special seating arrangements while placing the students for the test. Provide sufficient empty spaces between students.
- Create and maintain a positive attitude concerning the value of tests for improving learning.