



**TEST ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES: A THREAT TO QUALITY
CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT IN THE TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES,
CAMEROON**

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Abstract

The quality of teachers' test administration procedures constitutes an essential aspect of quality classroom assessment, which must be properly managed to ensure that assessed students' performances align with their true abilities, knowledge, and competencies. Nonetheless, it would seem that these procedures are not often accorded due attention in the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) of Cameroon. This invariably jeopardizes and compromises the scores obtained by students in such tests and consequently, decisions made on them. Based on this premise, this study sought to assess teachers' test administration procedures and their effect on the quality of classroom assessment in the TTCs of Cameroon. The study adopted the survey research design and conveniently sampled 134 teachers and 28 administrative staff from five of the seven government TTCs of the North West Region of Cameroon. A 22-item questionnaire was used for data collection, and the data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that the TTCs do not scrupulously respect prescribed rules and regulations guiding the administration of tests. It further indicated that a linear combination of test administration procedures (before, during, and after the test) was significantly ($p < 0.01$) related to the effectiveness of assessment in the TTCs. Finally, there was no significant difference in the perception of administrative and teaching staff about the impact of test administration procedures on the quality of assessment in the TTCs. Based on these findings, school leadership and teachers should establish proper planning strategies before, during, and after the test, aimed at improving the test administration procedures in the TTCs of Cameroon.

Keywords: *Test administration procedures, Quality classroom assessment, Teacher Training Colleges.*

Introduction

The fact that classroom assessments constitute an integral part of the teaching-learning process cannot be overemphasized. Extant literature on measurement and evaluation (Nenty & Fetogang, 2014; Aduloju & Agi, 2015; Afemikhe, 2015; Tanyi & Wirngo, 2015), however, seems more focused on the quality of items that make up a test and teachers' competences and skills in test item construction. This actually does not paint an accurate picture of what quality classroom assessment is all about. It is as well important to underscore the fact that a mastery and respect of the procedures and conditions under which test items are administered and written are equally critical. Thus, the strict respect of standard procedures or prescribed rules and regulations governing test administration will equally contribute to raising the quality of classroom assessment. Especially, in the TTCs of Cameroon, where classroom assessment constitutes an indispensable ingredient for selection, placement, promotion, and certification purposes.

From this perspective, greater attention needs to be accorded to the test administration procedures in the TTCs. This, in effect, involves the process of the actual administration and writing of the test by the teacher and students, respectively. Accordingly, the quality of the test administration procedures, if not well managed, could equally jeopardize and compromise the scores obtained by students on a test, thereby putting into question the very essence of classroom assessment in terms of its reliability and validity.

Invariably, this presupposes that the quality of test administration procedures can sometimes bedevil the quality of classroom assessment. It therefore goes without saying that the test administration procedures must be properly managed to ensure that assessed students' performances align with their true abilities, knowledge, and competencies. Therefore, to minimize spurious decisions ensuing from poorly managed test administration procedures and to ensure that variation in students' performances on a test is a perfect reflection of their true knowledge, abilities, and competencies, the test administration procedure must be conducted in all fairness, uniformity, and identically for all students (Oluwatayo, 2012). For all these to be realistic, the test administrators (administration and teachers of the TTCs) should make sure the procedures and conditions under which such tests are administered are scrupulously respected.

To guarantee its effectiveness, the test administration procedure has been perceived to involve certain activities and standard procedures, and institutions and teachers are expected to scrupulously implement and manage them before, during, and after the testing exercise. (Rukundo and Magambo, 2010). It therefore follows that, in each of these stages, the classroom teacher, under the auspices of the school administration, is expected to systematically and coherently carry out certain activities or actions to enhance the success of

the exercise and consequently enhance the reliability and validity of the scores obtained from such tests.

A popular adage in pedagogy upholds that “proper preparation prevents poor performance.” (Farrant, 1988). This adage cannot be more relevant than when it comes to test administration activities before the period of testing. Especially given that this period enables the school administration and teachers to effectively plan, organize, and strategize on the success of this very important pedagogic exercise. In principle, the responsibility of the planning and organization of test administration procedure in the TTCs of Cameroon rests on the shoulders of Directors of Studies, under the close supervision of the principals and vice-principals. They plan how best these tests will be administered, under what circumstances, set up date lines for the submission of test items, draw up time tables and invigilators' list, produce, and package the test items following the number of students per level and class. These test materials are then stored and accessed only by the staff involved in the process. This is crucial because security lapses during this phase of the process sometimes result in some students having access to test questions beforehand. It will therefore not be superfluous to say that the effectiveness of the administration of the teacher-made tests during this period entails that the test administrators should pay particular attention to aspects concerning the safeguarding and security of test items.

In addition, students need to be reminded in advance of the necessary materials needed for the test. Students with special needs (braille, hearing aids) have to be considered before the start of the test, ensure rooms where the test is to be administered have adequate ventilation and lighting, ensure seats have been arranged in such a way that students cannot look at each other's work, ensure students have been thoroughly prepared for the test by suggesting to them ways of studying, giving them practice tests like those to be used, teaching them test-taking skills and stressing the value of tests for improving learning. (Rukundo and Magambo, 2010).

However, in practice, these procedures seem only haphazardly or nonchalantly respected. More often than not, teachers fail to respect even the deadlines set for submitting their items for typing. Even those who do, most often hardly recognize their test items, as they are often loaded with typographical errors or whole sections of some items are completely left out. This state of affairs inadvertently impacts the test administration procedures, thereby compromising the effectiveness of the assessment process in terms of the validity and reliability of the scores obtained from such tests.

The testing environment also constitutes another important consideration during the period before the test. It is of utmost importance that testing takes place under conducive conditions. In this respect, Ohuche and Akeju (1988) submit that adequate measures should be put in place in advance to control atmospheric conditions like ventilation or uncontrolled winds in the classroom and lighting. Accordingly, classroom windows should be in good condition so that they can be opened whenever possible to allow free movement of air or shut

to control winds. Classrooms should have ceilings to control temperatures. However, taking a close look at some of the classrooms of the TTCs, one is shocked at the appalling state in which students are taught and assessed. Some classrooms have windows without louvers to control the flow of wind or air, wooden windows with sealed shutters to control ventilation or light, and classrooms with no ceiling, and so on. How then do we expect tests written under such conditions to meet the minimum requirements of reliability and validity?

From another perspective, Nworgu (2015) thinks that during the period before testing, enough space and seats should be made available to reduce cheating. This point is crucial as cheating during the sequential tests in the TTCs is rampant. Students not only copy from friends but are caught using pre-prepared materials and so on. Thus, to reduce cheating and to prevent score contamination, it is necessary that teachers and school administration ensure that separate seats and desks are used and student made to sit on alternate seats.

Equally, Teachers' test administration procedures and the effectiveness of classroom assessment risk being jeopardized and compromised, if certain conditions are not properly handled during the period of testing. To ensure the successful management of this period, the test administrator (school administration) and invigilators (classroom teachers) must work in synergy. On the test day, they are expected to be present at least 30 minutes earlier to attend to any unforeseen problem that may arise and be sure all is set for the effective kickoff of the test. A good rapport should also be established with the students, as being friendly and cheerful helps to dissipate anxiety associated with tests. (Okpala, 2015)

Before the start of the test, it is instructive that test directions should be specified for students to understand exactly what they are to do and how they are to do it. These directions should be simple, clear, and straightforward. (Bergman, 1981; Cronbach, 1984). The avoidance of noise and other distractions emanating from within or without the test hall is equally primordial and an issue of great concern during this period. Whether these occur when invigilators are reading test directives or giving some explanations, their effects can be considerable. Ohuche and Akeju (1981) affirm that the noise and other distractions from within might come from students' whispers amongst themselves, movements of seats, questions from students, and so on. These can, however, be addressed if all instructions were to be given and students' worries attended to before the test begins. For noise and distractions coming from other classrooms, Akoko (2015) suggests that in- school test administration needs to work around class periods and bell schedules synchronized with the test timing.

Also, the tendency of some invigilators to try to help individual students during this period is quite unfortunate and should be discouraged. Good test administration practices are only effective if all students are given a fair chance to demonstrate their mastery of the learning outcomes. The problem with helping some students even clarify an ambiguous item stems from the fact that it may put others in the class at a disadvantage, especially given that in large classrooms, only the very courageous and confident students may take the initiative to solicit the invigilator's help, while the shy and quiet students may be reticent. Under such

circumstances, it might be instructive to explain the ambiguous item to the entire class. However, if teachers were to systematically develop their test items, this problem would not arise in the first place. (Bergman, 1981).

Careful proctoring or invigilation is also of prime importance during the testing period. Teachers' testing practices and the effectiveness of the teacher-made tests may not produce the desired results in the absence of strict invigilation. It is quite paradoxical how, during the period of the end-of-course certificate exam, invigilation by classroom teachers tends to be more serious, while the very exercise by the same teachers during classroom assessment tends to be haphazardly and nonchalantly conducted. Invigilators have been observed to be reading novels, answering phone calls, marking or scoring previous tests, or even sleeping during the period of classroom assessment. This attitude is quite regrettable, especially given that scores obtained by students in classroom assessment equally constitute a significant coefficient of the scores in the certificate exams in the TTCs of Cameroon. It is therefore of paramount importance that the school administration of the different TTCs should ensure that there is strict invigilation during classroom assessment, without which the exercise might end up being a waste of time.

In this vein, Rukundo and Magambo (2010), advocating for the effectiveness of classroom assessment, have prescribed careful proctoring of the testing process, including such measures as periodically walking around the room and keenly observing how the students are doing. Though Okpala (2015) seems to be of the view that excessive perambulation in the test hall during exams may be counterproductive, as it tends to distract students. However, the point cannot be denied that careful vigilance is crucial and will go a long way in curbing the unprecedented cases of cheating and other examination malpractices observed during the period of classroom assessment in the TTCs of Cameroon.

Evidently, the success of the test administration process in the TTCs in Cameroon is only complete when the test materials are securely in the hands of the directors of studies. Especially, given that at this stage in the testing process, students have been observed to have either stealthily withdrawn their scripts in the event that they found the test difficult or introduced pre-prepared materials in their answer sheets to gain undue advantage. In some rare instances, some have gone as far as withdrawing the scripts of their fellow mates to incriminate them. Thus, the meticulous respect of the procedures after the test is equally important. The period after the test, therefore consist of collecting and accounting for the writing materials and submitting them to the test administrators. According to Rukundo and Magambo (2010), the allocated scripts should be counted to ensure their number corresponds with the names on the attending register. In this regard, Nworgu (2015) maintains that when the test is over, students could either be asked to sit tight on their seats while invigilators go round collecting the answer scripts in a predetermined order or asked to leave the hall in an orderly manner, leaving their scripts on their tables. These measures are aimed at discouraging cheating and other distractions at the end of the test.

The effective implementation and application of all these test directives before, during, and after the period of test administration in the TTCs will no doubt improve the nature and quality of the teachers' testing practices, and this will go a long way to make the scores obtained from the test administered a true representation of students' knowledge and skills in the various disciplines taught in the TTCs.

Statement of Problem

Classroom assessment and evaluation of students' learning, unquestionably, is at the centre of the teaching-learning process in school. Especially, in the TTCs of Cameroon, where the results obtained from such processes constitute a significant coefficient of the end-of-course certificate exam. Though studies carried out in this area (Yusuf, 2014; Aduloju & Agi, 2015; Afemikhe, 2015; Ogunsola, 2016; Opataye, 2016; Mbah, 2018) most often seem to focus more on teachers' competences and skills in test item development, as if these were the only conditions sine qua non for quality classroom assessment. This obviously does not paint an accurate picture, given that, irrespective of the quality of test items, the quality of assessment has sometimes been bedevilled by the quality of teachers' test administration procedures. This ipso facto is indicative of the fact that the quality of teachers' test administration procedures constitutes an essential aspect of quality classroom assessment, which must be properly managed to ensure that assessed students' performances align with their true abilities, knowledge, and competencies.

From this perspective, Afemikhe (2015) notes that the quality of teachers' test administration procedures has been threatened by practices such as "leakage, external assistance, smuggling, copying, collusion, intimidation and substitution". Also, studies by Aworanti (2014) submit that "immoral and nefarious attitude of some examination personnel" are among some of the factors responsible for the improper conduct of test administration. While Tanyi and Wirngo (2015) focus on the environment of test construction, which at times is overcrowded, leading to cheating, fear, and test anxiety among others. All these attest to the fact that just like teachers' test construction practices, their test administration procedures equally could render the classroom assessment process ineffective, and if not properly managed, could equally jeopardize and compromise the decisions emanating from the classroom assessment process.

The ability, therefore, to engage in effective test administration practices that are fair, uniform, and identical for all students and indispensable in capturing students' true abilities and skills in the respective disciplines, has become an essential expectation in the TTCs of Cameroon. It is, therefore, critical that the standard procedures and laid down rules and regulations guiding the conduct of test administration procedures in these institutions should be scrupulously respected. It is on this premise that this study seeks to explore teachers' test administration procedures and their threat to quality classroom assessment in the TTCs of Cameroon.

Research Questions

Based on the above statement of the problem, the following research questions guided the study;

1. How well do the TTCs respect the laid-down rules and regulations guiding the test administration procedures before, during, and after administering tests?
2. To what extent can the quality of classroom assessment be predicted from a linear combination of test administration procedures in the TTCs?
3. Is there any significant difference in the perception between administrative staff and teachers about the impact of test administration procedures on the quality of assessment?

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design. The population of this study consisted of the administrative staff and teachers of all the government teacher training colleges of the North West Region of Cameroon. Though due to the tense socio-political environment in the region at the time of carrying out this study, only five (5) out of the seven (7) TTCs were accessible. The convenience sampling technique was adopted to select 134 teachers and 28 administrative staff, making a total sample size of 162 used for the study.

A questionnaire on test administration procedures in the TTCs was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into sections A and B. Section A consisted of background Information about the respondents. Section B consisted of a list of 22 statements (items) used to collect information on the variables of the study. Each item contained four (4) options in the form of a Likert scale. Strongly Disagree (SD), Somewhat Disagree (SWD), Somewhat Agree (SWA), Strongly Agree (SA), with a four-point (4) scoring system.

The validity of the questionnaire was ensured by calculating the content validity index, which stood at 0.84, thus validating the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest and the calculation of Cronbach alpha, which stood at 0.78. Thereby establishing the reliability of the instrument. A face-to-face approach was used in the administration of the instrument, and the data obtained were analysed through descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test and multiple regression analysis. The statistical analysis was done using SPSS version 20.0.

Results

Research question 1:

How well do the TTCs respect the laid-down rules and regulations guiding the test administration procedures before, during, and after administering the test?

Table 1: The respect of laid down rules and regulations before test administration in TTCs

SN	ITEM	SD	SWD	SWA	SA
1	Teachers of the TTCs most often do not respect date line for the submission of test items during the period before exams	22 13.6%	37 22.8%	33 20.4%	70 43.2%
2	There is often the lack of proper planning strategies during the period before test administration in the TTCs	64 39.5%	70 43.2%	17 10.5%	11 6.8%
3	The examination time tables produce during the period before testing are usually not respected due to poor coordination	17 10.5%	44 27.2%	34 21.0%	67 41.4%
4	The list of invigilators drawn up during the period before testing are usually hardly respected	70 43.2%	43 26.5%	24 14.8%	25 15.4%
5	The test items produced in the TTCs are always filled with typographical errors and omissions	13 8.0%	41 25.3%	51 31.5%	57 35.2%
6	Some school personnel sometimes leak exams questions to students during the production and packaging of test items	4 2.5%	13 8.0%	79 48.8%	66 40.7%
Total		190 19.55%	248 25.5%	238 24.5%	296 30.45%
Grand Total			438 45.05%		534 54.95%

Table 1 above exposes the views of respondents as to how the TTCs respect the laid down rules and regulations before test administration. The table reveals 45.05% of the respondents sampled disagree that the TTCs do not respect the laid down rules and regulations before test administration, while a majority of them, 54.95%, attest to the fact that the TTCs do not respect these guiding rules before testing. From this descriptive statistical analysis, one can conclude that the TTCs do not adhere scrupulously to the guiding rules and regulations before test administration.

Table 2: The respect of laid down rules and regulations during test administration in TTCs

SN	ITEM	SD	SW D	SWA	SA
7	The examination environment is usually not very conducive during the period of examination in the TTCs	2 1.2%	19 11.7 %	74 45.7%	67 41.4 %
8	The invigilator / examinee ratio is usually not respected during the exam period in the TTCs	11 6.8%	21 13%	70 43.2%	60 37%
9	Some students do smuggle in pre-prepared materials in the exam halls during the period of exams in the TTCs	15 9.3%	30 18.5 %	57 35.2%	60 37%
10	The invigilation during the period of exams in the TTCs is usually not effective	12 7.4%	23 14.2 %	66 40. %7%	61 37.7 %
11	The examination period in the TTCs is usually characterized by leakages of examination questions	11 6.8%	41 25.3 %	41 25.3%	69 42.6 %
12	The test duration is usually not respected during the period of examination in the TTCs	44 27.2%	64 39.5 %	31 19.1%	23 14.2 %
Total		95 9.78%	198 20.3 7%	339 34.87 %	340 34.9 8%
Grand Total		293 30.15%	679 69.85%		

Table 2 above reveals that 30.15% of the respondents disagree that TTCs do not respect laid-down rules and regulations during test administration. An overwhelming majority (69.85%) agree that these rules and regulations are hardly respected during the period of test administration.

Table 3: The respect of laid down rules and regulations after test administration in TTCs

SN	ITEM	SD	SW D	SWA	SA	MEA N
13	Invigilators usually make sure students' answer script are collected in a systematic order after the test	1 0.6%	13 8%	73 45.1 %	75 46.3 %	3.37
14	Invigilators always make sure the names of students on the answer sheet corresponds with the names on the attendant registers	27 16.7 %	36 22.2 %	47 29% %	52 32.1 %	2.77
15	Invigilators always make sure all the test materials collected are submitted to the personnel in charge of running the exam	11 6.8%	29 17.9 %	49 30.2 %	73% 45.1	3.14
16	Invigilators always report all cases of examination malpractices to the personnel of the exams	32 19.8 %	22 13.6 %	51 31.5 %	57 35.2 %	2.82
Total		71 10.98 %	100 15.4 3%	220 33.9 5%	257 39.6 8%	12.1
Grand Total		171 26.41%		477 73.63%		

Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of the sample's responses as to how laid down rules and regulations are respected after test administration in TTCs. As the table portrays, an insignificant 26.41% of the responses suggest that the TTCs do not respect the rules and regulations after test administration. However, a majority of the respondents 73.63% attest to the fact that TTCs do respect the laid down rules and regulations after test administration.

Research question 2:

To what extent can the quality of assessment be predicted from a linear combination of test administration procedures in the TTCs?

Table 4: Summary of regression for the combined effect of independent variables on the prediction of the quality of assessment

R=.332; R Square = .110; Adjusted R Square = .093; Std Error = 2.300					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	103.516	3	34.505	6.524	.000 ^b
Residual	835.626	158	5.289		
Total	939.142	161			

Table 4 reveals a significant combined effect of the independent variable test administration procedure (before, during, and after) on the prediction of the quality of assessment. The result yielded $R = .332$, $R\text{-square} = .110$, and adjusted $R\text{ Square} = .093$. The ANOVA result from the regression analysis shows that there was a significant combined effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable, $F(3,158) = 6.524$, $P < 0.05$.

Research question 3:

Is there any significant difference in the perception of administrative staff and teaching staff about the impact of test administration procedures on the quality of assessment?

Table 5 on test administration procedures on the quality of assessment in the TTCs

Respondents on the issue of the quality of assessment	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig t
Administrative staff's opinion on test administration procedures to quality of assessment	28	21.61	2.061			
Teaching staff's opinion on test administration procedures to quality of assessment	134	20.69	2.460	1.848	160	.066

In comparing the mean score of administrative staff to the mean score of teaching staff for this study, an independent t-test was calculated; there is no equality of variance in the results,

and no significant difference was found, $t_{(44.666)} = 2.075$, $P > 0.05$. The mean of the administrative staff ($m = 21.61$, $sd = 2.061$) was not significantly different from the mean of the teaching staff ($m = 20.69$, $sd = 2.460$).

Discussion

The findings from this study on whether or not the TTCs respect the laid down rules and regulations before, during, and after test administration revealed that they do not necessarily comply with these rules and regulations before and during test administration. However, these seem respected after tests are administered. In this perspective, Ashworth (1982) intimates that variation in students' scores should be due to individual differences and not due to variation in administration, therefore insisting that the test administration procedure must be right, uniform, and identical for all students. Corroborating this view, Afemihke (2015) asserts that the non-compliance with stipulated guidelines during test administration causes assessed performance not to be related to actual performance. Accordingly, the World Bank Group (2001), as stated by Afemihke (2015), outlines without equivocation that examination malpractice is a "deliberate act of wrongdoing" which consequently places examinees at an "unfair advantage or disadvantage". This provides eloquent proof to the fact that the administration of tests constitutes another important feature of teachers' testing practices as far as the teaching-learning process is concerned.

The findings of research question two revealed that a linear combination of test administration procedures (before, during, and after the test) was significantly related to the effectiveness of assessment in the TTCs. These findings tie with the viewpoint of Tanyi and Wirngo (2015), who hold that the ability for teachers to engage in high-quality assessment is a sine qua non for effective assessment, which requires mastering the professional knowledge and skills involved in the field of assessment and evaluation. This obviously will involve mastering and complying with the laid-down guidelines and regulations of the test administration procedures before, during, and after the test. In this respect, Mbah (2018) submits that the quality of the test administration process as a whole should not be minimized in the teaching-learning process, as it can jeopardize the effectiveness of the assessment process, thereby putting into question the very essence of the test in terms of its reliability and validity.

Research question three sought to know whether there was any significant difference in the perception of administrative staff and teaching staff about the impact of test administration procedures on the quality of assessment. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in the perception of administrative and teaching staff about the impact of test administration procedures on the quality of assessment. The adduced reason for this can be as a result of their awareness of the laid-down rules and regulations guiding the test administration procedures as a whole, and their contribution to the quality of assessment. In this respect, Aworanti (2014) opines that "their reasoning therefore can be

said to be alike and factual” on this issue. This, implicitly, is an awakening call that greater impetus needs to be given to test administration procedures in the TTCs in order to improve the quality of students’ assessment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study are indicative of the fact that TTCs do not scrupulously comply with the laid-down rules and regulations guiding the administration of tests. This obviously has some profound repercussions on the quality of students’ assessment from which decisions are taken for selection, placement, promotion, certification, and employment purposes. As Afemikhe (2015), citing Chileshe (2010) points out, the products from such faulty assessment practices “will fail to comprehend the complex rules of business and lead the country into underdevelopment”. Could this inadvertently imply that the present state of underdevelopment of Cameroon could be attributed to the employment and reliance on professionals emanating from poor assessment practices in educational institutions? Thankfully, the administrative and teaching staff of the TTCs acknowledge the contribution of quality test administration procedures to quality assessment. Based on the conclusions of this study and in order to fight against the breach of the laid down rules and regulations guiding test administration procedures in the TTCs, especially before and during the test, the following recommendations were made.

1. Teachers of the TTCs should make conscious and sustained efforts aimed at improving their test administration procedures, especially before and during test administration.
2. Proper planning strategies must be established before, during, and after the period of test administration in the TTCs.
3. The school authorities should make sure the examination environment is rendered conducive during the period of examination in the TTCs.
4. There should be strict invigilation and serious sanctions meted out found guilty of one form of examination malpractice or the other.
5. Regular workshops and seminars to upgrade teachers’ awareness and competencies in test development and administration should be organized.

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