

CHAPTER 3

*Psychological Testing and Inclusive Schooling
Issues and Prospects in Central Africa*

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3.1 Introduction

One of the five defined subregions of Africa is Central Africa. This region is the heart or the core zone of the continent. In total, there are nine countries that fall within this region under the classification of the United Nations. These countries include Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of the Congo, São Tomé, and Príncipe. During the Scramble for Africa in 1884 and 1885, much of the region was shared between France, Britain, and Belgium. The Lake Chad basin was later forcefully added by the French to be a part of French West Africa with Britain getting parts of the basin as well. The Germans took the whole of Cameroon until the nations around the basin regained their independence.

Africa has been and remains a major recipient of external influences that have been imposed unsolicited (Nsamenang & Dawes, 1998). Scientific psychology as well as psychological testing arrived in Africa with colonization in the context of anthropological research (Peltzer & Bless, 1989) as well as in allied service sectors like health, education, and evangelism. Like every colonial import into Africa, it has retained an imperialistic and racist identity (Owusu-Bempah & Moffitt, 1995) in the sense that its theories and methods are still Eurocentric and its primary focus is on topics that reflect this externalized orientation, thereby largely losing “sight of the soil out of which the existing (African) society has grown and the human values it has produced” (Wastermann, 2001).

Compared with psychology’s status in other world regions, the state of scientific psychology and psychological testing in Afrique noire or black Africa is inchoate (Nsamenang, 1993), except in South Africa where legislation and ethical codes in the discipline “are relatively well developed, compared with most European countries” and “second only perhaps to the USA and Canada.” As the discipline stands today, Afrique

noire occupies an outlier position in the psychology world and, given its limited capacity to generate and share its own psychology, it is a net importer rather than a generator of psychological knowledge. However, it is slowly evolving into a professional discipline, a fledgling science that still occupies only the fringes of academia and society in most African countries (Nsamenang, 1995).

The evolution and development of scientific psychology and psychological testing in sub-Saharan Africa has not been uniform. Variation exists across and within countries, regions, and language blocks in the orienting models, resources, conditions for training, research, and applications as well as in the number of psychologists and their integration into research, policy, and service programs. Whereas countries like Cameroon, Chad, and Gabon have been “struggling” to establish the discipline, formal psychology institutions and services already exist in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Nsamenang, 2007). Psychology has long been established in South Africa, where it is said to be more similar than it is different from psychology elsewhere in the world. In general, psychology seems to be more “advanced” in English-colonized Africa than in those countries colonized by the French, Portuguese, and Spanish, a state of the field that reflects the mind sets of its Euro-American exporters and their Anglo-driven values.

Historically, the science of psychology and measurement of human behavior in sub-Saharan Africa has “advanced” from primary focus on the precocity of physical development of the African child through exploring various aspects of Africa’s developmental ecocultures (e.g., Nsamenang, 1992; Weisner et al., 1997) to investigating specific domains of psychosocial development and attempting Africentric measures of cognitive abilities or intelligences (e.g., Kathuria & Serpell, 1999; Mpofu, 2002; Nsamenang, 2006b; Tchombe, 2011; Serpell, 1993).

Psychological testing is very important and advantageous with regards to the practice of inclusive schooling and education. UNESCO (1994) defines inclusive education/schooling “as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion in all ramifications within and from education.” Thus, inclusive schooling/education involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures, and strategies, with the conviction that it is the responsibility of the state to educate all children. Education is intended to provide diverse students with the skills and competencies needed to

enhance their lives. This includes assessment practices that enable teachers to identify students' current level of skills, their strength and weaknesses, target instruction at student's personal level, monitor student's learning, progress and plan to conduct adjustments in instruction and evaluate the extent to which students have met instructional goals.

Since 1994, when many countries ratified the renowned Salamanca Statement on social and educational inclusion, efforts have been made to include all children in general day care and school systems and thus reduce mechanisms of exclusion and the prominent role formerly ascribed to special needs education (UNESCO, 1994). In this light, the practice of psychological testing is very important in schools because it supports children in achieving success in school. If children have undiagnosed psychological, emotional, or behavioral difficulties, psychological testing can detect these challenges and help schools place students in the best learning environments to meet their needs. Psychological testing can also be used to benefit children with previously diagnosed conditions and to put them in classrooms where they can be challenged and motivated to grow both intellectually and personally (Mpofu & Nyanungo, 1998). The overall objectives for assessing students with special needs have changed with the movement toward inclusion. The earlier, traditional emphasis was on testing to establish a diagnosis and determine eligibility for services with norm-referenced assessment tools, whereas current emphasis is on developing a profile of student's strengths and weaknesses based on data obtained from a variety of sources and with a variety of approaches to assessment. This has resulted in increased use of assessment methods that go beyond traditional norm-referencing (Melem, 2016).

The purpose of this chapter therefore is to (a) identify the types of psychological tests in use in Central Africa, (b) determine whether or not validation studies have been conducted for the test, (c) point out some key problems associated with psychological testing in Central Africa, and (d) make recommendations for improving psychological testing in Central Africa.

3.2 Types of Psychological Tests and Inclusive Schooling in Central Africa

For most schools in Africa and in the Central African regions especially, the preferred approaches to assessment of special needs for inclusion in the regular classroom today are contextual, performance-oriented, holistic, interactive, multi-perspective, and real-world oriented (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2005). Relevant behaviors are observed and rated in natural

contexts and performance-oriented assessments are used for evaluating selected behaviors from a holistic or focused-holistic perspective. Checklists and criterion-referenced probes have also been developed that focus on (a) basic skills and strategies for listening, speaking, reading, and writing, (b) responses to curriculum demands (e.g., social science), (c) classroom interactions between teachers, peers, and the student, and (d) effective classroom practices for management and instruction. The student is seen as a multifaceted entity with behaviors that change as a function of external demands. The assessment process is broad in scope and designed to provide opportunities to obtain authentic and sensitive indicators of performances in the real-world setting of the classroom and community (Sokopo, 2004). Machona and Kapambwe (2003) hold that the least restrictive environment for a student is the regular classroom, as such emphasis ought to be laid on using procedures that foster multi-perspective and collaborative processes. This allows the staff to profile a student's strengths and weaknesses, provide a baseline for intervention, and support dynamic, long-term educational planning as such achieving the goals of inclusion.

However, given differing levels of literacy and education, "taking a test" is not something that is necessarily within the everyday experience sphere of many people in Africa. According to Nell (1997), the extent to which a test-taker is "test wise" has a significant impact on test performance. Consequently, if an assessment practitioner wants to follow ethical testing practices, the extent to which it is possible to even consider administering a test is a decision that needs to be reached early on. In some instances, using other forms of assessment (e.g., behavioral observation) and obtaining information from key family members and community informants (e.g., parents, teachers, religious ministers/priests, a respected elder person in the community) may be preferable to administering a test to someone who has no test-taking experience. Not only will this eliminate the anxiety that taking a test could have for such a person, but it will also provide the assessment practitioner with more valid and authentic information about the person.

Norm-referenced tests allow educators to obtain quantitative measures for evaluating and comparing prerequisite language behaviors and other competencies for inclusion. The quantitative data from norm-referenced tests also play a role in establishing a student's need for special support services and the potential for learning in the inclusive classroom. In most countries in Central Africa according to Jatau, Uzo, and Lere (2002), educational specialists use norm-referenced tests to monitor academic

achievement, intellectual ability, psycho-educational ability, or language and literacy as a first cut in the process of evaluating and diagnosing a child's learning difficulties. Olabisi (2005) holds that norm-referenced tests are designed to (a) obtain a preliminary diagnosis of a learning disorder, (b) determine the extent and nature of the deficit or disorder, (c) establish eligibility for specialized services or curriculum adaptations, and/or (d) determine eligibility for taking academic and college entry tests without time limits (Wiig & Secord, 1999).

According to Lerner (1993), within the educational sector of the Cameroonian, Chadian Central African Republic's educational sectors, norm-referenced tests mostly contain a range of items grouped into subtests, with each subtest designed to probe a specific aspect or dimension of the overall abilities tested. Subtests are often clustered to form composites designed to measure specific theoretical constructs, such as receptive and expressive language, or listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The standard scores on the total test and the composites provide performance constructs that are the best measures of the collective set of tasks. Ikpaye (2001) stipulates that individual norm-referenced tests vary in the content, tasks, and underlying models for subtests and constructs. They may also vary in the extent to which underlying neuropsychological functions and constructs are probed. They are, however, similar in the procedures used for standardization, analysis of data, scores reported, and interpretation of results. This makes it possible for a trained diagnostician to compare tests and test results, and evaluate a student's performances across a variety of tests.

Norm-referencing tests are used to identify inadequacies in basic skills and determine whether or not a student's inadequacies stem from factors related to differences in language or motivation or from inherent neuropsychological deficits and disorders. When results from norm-referenced tests are available to teachers, performances and clinical interpretations are taken into account in complements to other information about the student (Ikujuni, 2005).

Kanjee (2003) postulates that criterion-referenced assessment uses a series of items to evaluate the acquisition of specific academic or language and communication skills and rules. Each probe is designed to contain items with a specific content, skill, or rule focus. Because the probes in a criterion-referenced inventory have such a specific focus and evaluate specific curriculum objectives or educational outcomes, they do not provide a differential diagnosis of language or learning disabilities. The focus in criterion-referenced testing is on skill acquisition, and usually does not

allow for evaluation of neuropsychological functions or deficits. Criterion-referenced test results validate norm-referenced test scores, teacher observations, or classroom evaluations of, for example, reading comprehension or mathematical skills. They are also used to determine focused targets for intervention, identify appropriate educational objectives, and establish educational outcomes (Crooks, 2002).

In countries of Africa and most especially countries of the Central Africa subregion, summative assessments and high-stake tests are designed to provide information on the learners' progression to the next class and teachers have tended to rely on these tests and examinations at the end of the school term and academic year in their assessment of learners. The results of these tests and examinations might tell teachers which learners in their classes have failed and which have not, but they do not tell us the kind of instruction the learners need to master and the outcomes or what errors in thinking led to the incorrect answers in the tests (Ahsan, 2016). In order to get that kind of information, teachers need the results provided by the consistent use of classroom-based formative assessment.

Formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning (Black & William, 1998), takes place anytime during a lesson. It identifies strengths and weaknesses of the learner and it is intended to enhance the learner's final performance. This means that it is not only used to support learning but also teaching. "Assessment for learning" is stressed as a way to improve teaching and the learning of learners, and also as an "integral part of the learning, teaching and assessment cycle." The teacher obtains and uses information about learners' progress toward the learning goals. A learner needs to know where he or she is and understand not only where they want to be but also know how to "fill the gap" between his or her current knowledge and understanding and desired level. Black and William (1998) further argue that formative assessment does not only serve as an effective classroom assessment tool but also as a "high-quality instructional feedback tool" that is timely, useful, and appropriate. Timely feedback, which is given as soon as possible after the assessment occurs, "can influence the next steps in the learning process." Black and William (1998) terms this as a "useful assessment" that is both diagnostic and prescriptive in reinforcing precisely what learners were expected to learn, identifies what was learned well, and describes what needs to be learned better. Black and William (1998) state that assessment becomes formative when the information is used to adapt teaching and learning to meet student needs. Table 3.1 shows the types of psychological tests and their level of usage in Central Africa.

Table 3.1. *Types of psychological tests and level of usage in Central Africa*

Sn	Type of tests	Level of usage
1.	Aptitude test	Rarely used.
2.	Achievement test	Highly used by schools to monitor learning progress among learners.
3.	Diagnostic tests	Rarely used in schools to understand category of learners but it is mostly used in hospitals to diagnose health related problems among individuals.
4.	Placement test	Rarely used by schools to place learners in specific programs.
5.	Intelligence test	Rarely used by schools and other organizations to place people according to their different intelligences.
6.	Personality test	Rarely used by schools and other organizations in society.
7.	Vocational test	Some industries/companies use it in terms of studying candidates portfolios, oral interviews and observation of performance on the job.
8.	Attitude test	Rarely used by schools and other organizations in society.
9.	Teacher made tests - Written, performance, and Oral) - Formative and summative	Highly used by schools to monitor learning progress among learners
10.	Examination board made tests	Highly used to monitor academic achievement among learners at the end of the study programme. For example, Cameroon General Certificate of Education Board (CGCEB).
11.	University admission tests	Some university departments use it to select students for specific programs.

Source: Tchombe, Wirdze, Asangha, Melem, & Ndzetar (2020), adapted from the study

From Table 3.1 it can be seen that schools in Central African regions mostly make use of achievement tests such as teacher-made tests and examination board tests in order to monitor students' progress and academic achievement. The other categories are rarely used by schools.

3.3 Issues/Problems Associated with the Current State of Psychological Testing in Central Africa

In Central Africa and most of sub-Saharan Africa, like in many developing regions of the world, the lack of psychological research has significant implications for intervention and research (Nsamenang, 2006a; Nsamenang, 2007;

Mpofu, 2002). The interest here is on the absence of culturally and inclusive appropriate, standardized, reliable, and valid psychometric measures to use in schools and societies to measure components of human behavior. More so, the lack/absence of trained personnel in psychological testing within school settings/societies also possess a big challenge (Holding et al., 2004; Kathuria & Serpell, 1998; Nsamenang, 2007).

Importing standardized tests from Western countries may seem to provide the easiest solution for this shortage. However, the transfer of tests to a non-Western context is frequently accompanied by test bias/measurement errors and limited validity (Greenfield, 1997; Van de Vijver, 2002). This bias may be due to a lack of familiarity with test demands (Mulenga, Ahonen, & Aro, 2001), poor translation of test items (Van de Vijver, 2002), stimulus unfamiliarity (Sigman et al., 1988; Sonke et al., 1999), and incomplete coverage or poor sampling of behaviors associated with a construct (Sternberg et al. 2002; Van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004).

Education examination boards in most Central African countries do not provide their teachers with assessment resources that include access to item banks for different levels and subject areas, software to compile high-quality classroom tests linked to the curriculum, and software to analyze, interpret, and monitor learners' performance levels (Nsamenang, 2009), neither do they carry out placement, diagnostic, personality, or even intelligence tests for appropriate inclusive practices.

In practice, however, most teachers are required to develop their own assessment instruments and tools. Machona and Kapambwe (2003) note that it is unrealistic to expect teachers, especially those working in disadvantaged schools, to develop high-quality instruments to assess learners given their limited expertise and the significant amount of time required to do so. In their review of assessment practices in Africa, Kellaghan and Greaney (2005) also found that the poor quality of classroom assessment can be attributed to the shortage of learning and teaching materials as well as to poorly qualified teachers.

3.4 Prospects of Psychological Testing and School Reforms in Central Africa

According to Malda and Van de Vijver (2005), two approaches, namely adaptation and assembly, seem to provide the most satisfactory solutions to the shortage of assessment measures in Central African countries, sub-Saharan African countries, and less developed countries of the world. Adaptation involves retaining some and changing other features of a Western instrument to increase the suitability of the instrument for the

new context; while assembly involves the construction of a new assessment measure. Participant consultation, through techniques such as focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and participant observations may provide a useful means of gaining the necessary insight to carry out adequate adaptation or assembly (Vogt et al., 2004).

To begin with, validation or standardization of imported tests is needed to address the problems of reliability, validity, and interpretation of scores. To address the ecological and cultural influences, psychologists within Central African countries are encouraged to seriously consider constructing Africentric psychological tests rather than relying heavily on the imported Eurocentric ones. Imported tests should be translated into the different spoken ethnic languages of the different countries that constitute Central Africa. To ensure the reliability, validity, and the appropriate interpretation of scores, the translated versions should also be subjected to validation studies.

To address the low adoption and use of the existing test norms, awareness should be created through dissemination of the norms. This can be achieved by means of (a) incorporating discussions on validated tests in Central African countries into the teaching and learning of psychometrics at the universities and (b) provision of technical reports on the validated tests. Test developers and administrators should adopt an emic approach in which human behavior is examined using criteria related to a specific culture as opposed to using behavioral criteria that are presumed to be universal (etic approach).

In constructing and administering psychological tests within school settings and the society, test developers/administrators should take into consideration the concerns of equality, equity, and quality. In this light, psychological tests should be eco-culturally and inclusively friendly and thus reducing exclusion in all ramifications within and without school settings.

Apart from teacher-made tests that are mostly used among countries in Central Africa to determine the learning progress of learners, it is highly recommended that schools/societies should make use of other types of psychometric tests such as diagnostic tests, placement tests, vocational tests, aptitude tests, attitude tests, personality tests, and so on to gain information about the client's personality characteristics, symptoms, and problems in order to arrive at practical decisions about their behavior.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the meaning of psychological testing vis à vis its importance to the practice of inclusive schooling within countries of

Central Africa. Different types of tests used in Central African countries have been examined and it was realized that most of the tests that were evident are mostly teacher-made tests and examination board tests. A good number of issues/problems associated with the current state of psychological testing in Central Africa were equally identified as well as some ethical issues to be considered before, during, and after administering psychological tests.

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