

## Secondary School Teachers and the Ability to Use Standardized Tests to Measure Student's Achievement: Gabel Awlia District's schools

Osama Nabil Mohammed<sup>1</sup> and Hesham A. Elsunni<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Alzaiem Alazhary, Faculty of Education, Curriculum and Teaching Method Department- Sudan

<sup>2</sup>University of Khartoum, Faculty of Education, Instructional Technology Department- Sudan

**Corresponding Author: Osama Nabil Mohammed**

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### Abstract

Students benefit directly when they take tests that offer information on how well they have mastered the material intended for learning, standardized tests fairly and comprehensively measure student performance, thus directly benefiting students while holding teachers accountable. It plays a major role in education today, whether they are achievement tests measuring subject-specific knowledge or aptitude tests measuring scholastic readiness. The purpose of this study is to answer the question that, to what extent that the secondary school teachers at Gabel Awlia District's schools are using standardized tests to measure student's achievement?; to what extent that the standardized test is measuring students' achievement?, and what kind obstacles and issues that lead to the absence of standardized test? The method used in this study is the descriptive analytical method; questionnaires have been distributed for 66.7% of the teachers' community. The study concluded that, standardized test is necessary to evaluate students' achievement and improving teaching and learning depend on the good test, but teachers do not always use it because of the poor condition that most of the district's schools have. The study recommends that there is a dire need for more teachers training courses to develop standardized test designing abilities in order to evaluate students well.

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**Keywords:** secondary school teachers, standardized tests, measure, student's achievement, gabel awlia

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### INTRODUCTION

The legal definition for standardized testing is, "A test administered and scored in a consistent or standard manner... administered under standardized or controlled conditions that specify where, when, how and for how long children respond to the questions. In standardized tests, the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent. A well-designed standardized test provides an assessment of an individual's mastery of a domain of knowledge or skill (US Legal, 2014). A standardized test is any examination that's administered and scored in a predetermined, standard manner.

Standardized testing is a central part, at all levels, of the current education process. Universities use standardized tests to assist in selecting applicants. For students in grades K-12, testing plays a critical role in evaluating and classifying students, as well as identifying educational strengths and weaknesses, throughout their compulsory education. Testing also shows teachers their own weaknesses and provides insight on how to better structure lesson plans and focus areas. Moreover, standardized state requirements demand accountability from the teachers to the school, the parents and government.

Standardized testing is a cheap and efficient method of measuring whether or not schools are achieving the state standards, sometimes forcing schools to revise their curriculum and testing programs so that they can reach these standards. The purpose of this paper is to describe how teachers at Gabel Awlia District's schools are using standardized tests to Measure Student's Achievement? To what extent that the standardized test is measuring students' achievement? And what kind obstacles and issues that lead to the absence of standardized test?

### THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leading a change in the field of education is one of the most complex tasks for educators. Student achievement measures the amount of academic content a student learns in a determined amount of time. Each grade level has learning goals or instructional standards that educators are required to teach. There are difficulties with providing valuable information that, educators and school leaders can use to improve instructional quality. The problem of this study is that there are huge achievement gaps among different student groups at the Gabel Awlia District's schools. The study aiming is to know the impact of standardized tests on students achievements and to answer the

questions: to what extent that the secondary school teachers at Gabel Awlia District's schools are using standardized tests to measure student's achievement?; to what extent that the standardized test is measuring students' achievement? And what kind of obstacles and issues that lead to the absence of standardized test?

### **THE LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study will be limited in the secondary school teachers and the ability to use standardized tests to measure student's achievement at the Gabel Awlia District's schools, Khartoum state the capital city of Sudan in 2014- 2015 academic year.

### **LITERATURES REVIEW**

Because standardized tests are created to be unbiased and objective, they supposedly ensure that the score a student receives is an accurate measurement of ability and progress. Validity and reliability are critical components test makers need, in order to create assessment tools, which create usable inferences about the knowledge and skill of students in a particular area (Popham, W. J. 1999). With the understanding that only such wide-scale testing can lead to validated educational practices, there is even more reason to verify what is included in standardized tests and to instill proper thinking skills that students must be taught in order to perform well on these tests (Simpson et al., 2004). How valid are standardized tests? When trends in student performance levels on similar standardized tests are not consistent, the accuracy of a particular test as an indicator of student achievement is questionable (Abrams et al., 2003).

Standardized tests provide comparison among and across different groups in order to make decisions to help students. Many teachers use the data from test results to drive their instruction, but most teachers agree that the results from a standardized test are only one part of their overall assessment of students. It is likely that the NCLB Act of 2001 will have a significant impact on state testing systems throughout the country, possibly pushing many states toward the norm-referenced tests that are quick and easy to administer and score (Hoff, as cited in Bullough et al., 2003). Standardized testing evolved to incorporate not only what group children should be classified in, but also to gauge what children were learning (U.S. Congress, 1992).

What teachers really need are assessment instruments that measure worthwhile skills or significant bodies of knowledge. Then teachers have to show the world that they can instruct children so those children make striking pre instructional to post instructional progress. If educators accept the position that standardized achievement test scores should not be

used to measure the quality of schooling, then they must provide other, credible evidence that can be used to ascertain the quality of schooling. (Popham, 2005, p.315). Standardized tests have changed the pace and content of instruction, where relentless drill practice for students is instilled. The concentration in tested content areas can be positive if it leads to greater emphasis on the knowledge and skills stressed in challenging content standards that the test is intended to measure (Linn, 2003).

Placing more focus on test content can also make teachers feel that their expertise in the education field is not being used to its full potential. Some teachers feel that being forced to teach to the test contradicts their ideas of a valid education for students. The implementation of the test may, in effect, lead to a de-professionalization of teachers (Abrams et al., 2003, p. 20). Pressure on students to perform well on tests can also increase anxiety and stress while taking the tests. Many factors can influence standardized test scores, including variations in test makeup, whether a student "tests well," language and cultural factors and how a student happens to feel on testing day. As a result, scholars agree that a single test score, or set of scores, does not reliably measure what students have actually learned in a particular class or at a particular school.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The method used in this study is the descriptive analytical method to describe the how secondary school teachers are using standardized tests to measure student's achievement, and questionnaires have been distributed for 66.7% of secondary schools teacher sample of Gabel Awlia district's schools at Khartoum the capital city of Sudan. the data has analyzed by using the SPSS program, finding the mean, standard deviation, valuation, -Test, and the Indication level at 0.05.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Effects of Classroom Management on Student Achievement**

The following table NO (1) present the result of an Effects of Classroom Management on Student Achievement and finding the mean, S.D, and T-Test.

From the above table (1) we notice that the teacher classroom management has a high impact on student's achievements. The Standardized test is necessary for a good measuring of students' achievement, improving teaching and learning depend on a good test and it is not so easy to provide the standardized test for students.

**Table NO (1)** an extent that teachers have a good knowledge about the standardized test.

<i>Items</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Valuation</i>	<i>T-Test</i>	<i>Indication level at 0.05</i>	<i>Deduction</i>
1. the standardized test is necessary for assessing students	2.9333	.25371	.000	20.149	mark	Agree
2. Improving teaching and learning depend on the standardized test.	2.5667	.50405	.000	6.153	mark	agree
3. Measuring students' achievement depends on providing a standardized test.	2.7667	.43018	.000	9.761	mark	Agree
4. Teachers have enough knowledge about then standardized test.	2.3667	.66868	.005	3.003	mark	Agree
5. It is possible for teachers to build a standardized test.	2.9000	.30513	.000	16.155	mark	Agree
6. It is easy to provide the standardized test for students.	2.2000	.76112	.161	1.439	Non-mark	Dis-Agree
7. The standardized test is essay thing to do.	2.3333	.71116	.016	2.567	mark	Agree
8. Sometimes test build on not scientifically methods.	2.7667	.43018	.000	9.761	mark	Agree
9. The standardized test is measurable and valuable.	2.9333	.36515	.000	14.000	mark	Agree
10. A good test is a better way to measure students' achievement.	2.6000	.67466	.000	4.871	mark	Agree

students' achievement and finding the mean, S.D, and T-Test.

**The standardized test is better way to measure students' achievement**

The following table NO (2) present the result of how the standardized test has a better way to measure

**Table NO (2)** the standardized test is better way to measure students' achievement

<i>Items</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Valuation</i>	<i>T-Test</i>	<i>Indication level at 0.05</i>	<i>Deduction</i>
1. using the standardized test decrease the mistakes on test correction	2.8333	.37905	.000	12.042	mark	Agree
2. the standardized test gives right mark for students	2.8000	.48423	.000	9.049	mark	agree
3. using the standardized test help to measure students differentiation	2.7667	.56832	.000	7.389	mark	Agree
4. the standardized test gives a standardized result	2.9000	.30513	.000	16.155	mark	Agree
5. the standardized test measure what teachers need to measure	2.7667	.50401	.000	8.332	mark	Agree

From the above table (2) it is clear that the standardized test has a better way to measure students' achievement, using standardized test decrease the mistakes on test correction, give the right mark for students, help to measure students differentiation, and help teachers to know more about students achievement.

**Obstacles and Issues that Lead to the Absence Of The Standardized Test in the Schools:**

The following table NO (3) present the result of what kind obstacles and issues that lead to the absence of the standardized test to measure students' achievement and finding the mean, S.D, and T-Test.

From the above table (3) it is clear that some teachers have no idea about how to design standardized test, there are very few training courses for developing standardized test, and teachers think that designing the standardized test takes time.

Positive ideas gained from standardized tests include being able to compare students at the same grade level and schools within the state and the nation. Students, parents, and teachers agreed that test results provide school districts with information that shows strengths and weaknesses with children and also needs that should be addressed. Data from test results helps guide instruction and give schools goals to work towards in the coming school year.

Table NO (3) Obstacles and issues that lead to the absence of the standardized test in the schools

Items	Mean	S.D	Valuation	T-Test	Indication level at 0.05	Deduction
1. teachers have no idea about how to design the standardized test	2.4667	.50742	.000	5.037	Mark	Agree
2. there are training courses for developing a standardized test	2.8000	.48423	.000	9.049	mark	agree
3. teachers think that designing a standardized test takes time	2.4000	.67466	.003	3.247	mark	Agree
4. teachers see that using a standardized test is not helpful	2.0667	.78492	.645	.465	mark	Agree
5. Teachers do not understand the role of the standardized test on measuring students' achievement.	2.1000	.66176	.415	.828	mark	Agree
6. teachers think that students they teach need not design a standardized test	1.5000	.77682	.001	-3.525	Non-mark	Agree
7.educational supervisor did not give more attention to the standardized test	2.4333	.77385	.005	3.067	mark	Agree

**CONCLUSION**

The use of standardized testing is supported by two fundamental assumptions, those being: (1) the standardized tests are designed objectively, without bias and (2) the standardized tests accurately assess a student’s academic knowledge. These assumptions have convinced school officials, to use test data, as the main criteria in determining a student’s academic ability and for creating curriculum. Because legislators also believe test data is a reliable indicator of student ability, these tests have become an integral part of the education process and are often used in drafting education policy. The study concluded that the standardized test is necessary for good measuring students’ achievement; improving teaching and learning depend on a good test. The standardized testing is incapable of providing an accurate measurement of student ability. The study recommends that there is a dire need for more training courses for developing standardized test designing ability for teachers in order to evaluate students. Different methods must be developed to teachers with written assessment tests.

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