
A comment on IER Test Development and Administration

Yusuf O. Abdi*

I have been receiving free copies of *IER-Flambeau* and the *Ethiopian Journal of Education* for the last few years. As a former director and founder of IER, I am very happy to tell you that I am deeply honoured by the fact that the present Director of IER and the editors of both IER's Flambeau and EJE do still remember me and are still sending me free copies. Please accept my heart felt gratitude to this effect.

I am sending you this note with two things in mind:

First of all, I want to say a few words on the article which appeared on the *IER-FLAMBEAU* Volume 7 No. 1 Dec. 1999. The article was written jointly by Mr. Abdul Nasir and Mr. Desalegn. The title of the article was "The Views of Addis Ababa University Administration Heads and candidates about IER Personnel Selection and Promotion Tests".

The article was well written and I hope it was enriched by the feedback received from the workshop participants. I have no comments on the methodologies and analysis of the findings. However, I would like to raise two issues which were historic and which if included would have made the entire research work very relevant.

- A. Perhaps you should have noted that AAU administrators do not often "use" the IER administered tests as major (sole) criteria for the selection and promotion of employees. Even though they often insist that such test results are critical, they use them for their decision making. In other words, they do not put much weight the use of such test results (perhaps 5 - 10% only). Please check with AAU - Administration how much "weight" is given to IER test results in their decision making, because this will have an

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impact on the relevance and test utilization and the overall improvement of IER tests in the future.

- B. As the authors of the article put it correctly, in a workshop conducted by IER in 1987, one of the recommendations given was that

TSU should prepare comparable tests for similar job classification and tests should be evaluated and revised once in every two years.

I could recall that following such recommendation some new tests were developed concerned professionals in the fields of Accounting, Auditing and Secretarial Sciences were commissioned by IER. The professionals then developed parallel tests. The idea was not only to revise the existing tests, but also to develop new tests as such as some of the existing tests were over used. I left IER when these newly developed tests were submitted and were ready for parallels try out.

Unfortunately, this piece of information was not mentioned in the above article. After I read the article in *IER Flambeau*, I informally raised the issue with the senior author of the article, Mr. Abdul Nasir. He confirmed the fact that indeed some of parallel tests were used by IER. However, the purpose of this note is to straighten up the record. At that time, IER spent a lot of time, effort and money to improve the over used and now "*irrelevant old tests*". Still I contend that the recommendations given in the article are valid and "*the IER had to revise its tests, it should have several parallel tests*". Finally, I like to commend the two authors of the article for their wonderful work.

The second point I like to raise is related to the development of "Entrance Examination" for AAU applicants. The new Education and Training Policy (1994) of the Ministry of Education stipulates that every Institution of Higher Learning in Ethiopia should design its own "*entrance, or admission examination or requirements*" for those students applying to join the institution. Next year, i.e. 1993 E.C. (2000/2001

academic year) the first group of Ethiopian students will be sitting for Grade Ten national examination. After two years (end of 1995 E.C.) these students could apply to join any institution of higher learning. In light of such development, AAU Senate met on a number of occasions in 1996 and deliberated on how to prepare for such an eventuality.

At AAU – Senate level, a number of sub-committees were appointed to study the option that AAU could have in designing and developing its own entrance examination. Even a foreign expert was invited to help in such a venture. I remember that finally AAU m- Senate decided that the responsibility to prepare such a Project (Development of an entrance Exam) should be given to IER because the Institute has all the professionals and other required facilities.

An informal discussion that I had recently with the present Director of IER confirmed that IER on its part made a number of additional preparation on the issue. A number of project proposals were sent to all concerned authorities both to AAU and MOE. Unfortunately no concrete action has been initiated so far in support and implementation of the Project because concerned authorities in AAU and MOE have not responded to the proposals submitted by IER. One reason why I raise such an issue now is because I am worried about the unnecessary delay in the actual implementation of project proposal i.e. preparing entrance examination for AAU. May be the officials are of the opinion that they still have time and the whole thing is not a matter of priority. Such assumptions are unacceptable, when one considers the time, effort and money put in to “test development and test standardization.” Such a process is long and tedious. Our authorities and in particular, AAU leadership should give a serious consideration to the whole matter; it is an urgent matter!