

A decline writing skills of dental students –A dilemma

Ashfaq Akram*

College of Medicine King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Multiple choice questionnaires (MCQs) are widely used in assessing theoretical knowledge. This is a method which has several response options or in other words, it is a type of examination in which students are given possible hints to choose the right answer. The correct option is the right answer but other options which are taken as wrong answer are called distractors. In most of dental schools, MCQs are paper based but grading is made by computer. However, trend is growing to administer entirely this examination on computer (e examination) because in many dental schools, MCQs make a major portion of assessment along OSPE/ OSCE or SAQs. They provide a cost-efficient testing format. The major advantage is they can be used to assess a large portion of contents in a relatively short period of time.

This is also fact that MCQs test the superficial knowledge of students. Their reliability is high and minimum of 40 high quality questions are required to produce alpha Cronbach of 0.8. Another major benefit, in addition to cost effectiveness, is the use of MCQs is taken as fair test because they test what has been taught. However, to prepare them as good quality questions require faculty efforts, time and coherence with teaching objectives.

In spite of these pros and cons, one farseeing aspect is neglected which is writing skills. MCQs are unable to develop and expand the ideas by learners. Unfortunately, the assessment tools of undergraduate dental curricula are comprised 'MCQs' as major section >60 percent. Curricula developers and planners should think how to combat the shrunk writing power of students at undergraduate level because at postgraduate level, the scenario is completely changed. They have to write dissertation in the range of 12-15 thousand words limit. The students who have not practiced writing even 150 words for five years, how they could be able to compose such high destiny? This is going to be dilemma in near future for dental graduates. Therefore, assessment

through essay write up answers should be encouraged. However, the standard and worth of long essay questions depend extensively on the part of the faculty members who have taught the students and they know how far and comprehensive information they have delivered in their teachings and what and how to be asked 'making a long essay question' as assessment tool. No doubt, the long essay questions should reflect the course objectives. Essay examination typically enable and allow larger freedom to the students to express their responses to questions and demands more writing. It is not just the greater writing actually it is reforming, appropriate and acceptable knowledge in the form of answers. Guessing by students is eliminated as in essay examination, there is no option to select from the given possible choices and they have to provide the answer rather than selecting the good response. Therefore, it is expected that a primary role of long essay write up would create synthesis skill in students. Therefore, medicunationists should at least revise the pattern of assessment proportion or develop alternate tool to develop the writing skills in students. A substantial portion of research should be focused on this aspect so that our dental students develop and restore the writing skills which is getting fade.

References

1. Norcini J, Anderson B, Bollela V, Burch V, Costa MJ, et al. (2011) Criteria for good assessment : consensus statement and recommendations from the Ottawa 2010 Conference. *Med Teach* 33:206-214. [[Crossref](#)]
2. Chenot JF, Ehrhardt M (2003) Objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) in dermedizinischen Ausbildung: Eine Alternative Zur Klausur. *Z. Allg. Med.* 79:1-7.
3. Norcini JJ, Swanson DB, Grosso LJ, Webster GD (1985) Reliability, validity and efficiency of multiple choice question and patient management problem item formats in assessment of clinical competence. *Med Educ.* 19:238-247. [[Crossref](#)]
4. Sadaf S, Khan S, Ali SK (2012) Tips for developing a valid and reliable bank of multiple choice questions (MCQs). *Educ Health.* 25:195-197. [[Crossref](#)]

Copyright: ©2018 Akram A. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Correspondence to: Ashfaq Akram, College of Medicine King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Email: ashfaqakram@hotmail.com

Received: January 20, 2018; **Accepted:** February 05, 2018; **Published:** February 08, 2018