

A reflection on the language assessment artefacts quality assurance process for building the TARMII e-assessment tool repository: Implications for development of language teachers' assessment and testing capabilities

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Abstract

The paper provides a reflection on the quality assurance processes instituted during the development of the TARMII e-assessment tool's repository. TARMII is an acronym for Teacher Assessment Resources for Monitoring and Improving Instruction. It is a web-based assessment tool designed for South African teachers to enhance teaching and learning through assessment. It comprises a test builder and a repository of stand-alone English Home Language (EHL) assessment items and full-length administration-ready EHL language tests for Foundation Phase. The assessment artefacts housed in the tool's repository were developed following the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Foundation Phase (i.e. Grades 1 to 3) EHL, making the assessment tool aligned to and in sync with the country's curriculum and schooling contexts. In addition, the tool has the capacity to auto-mark the selected-response (or multiple-choice) assessment items and the short answer constructed-response (open-ended) ones. However, essay type questions would require marking and inputting of scores in the tool by teachers. Once marking is complete, teachers could generate diagnostic reports indicating their learners' strengths and weaknesses. Utilising this tool, teachers will be able to select and draw from the repository, individual language assessment items to compile customised language tests or access readily available full language tests, to administer to their learners, and generate diagnostic reports to support classroom instruction. The paper focuses on the quality assurance processes implemented during the language items or tests preparatory stages aimed at producing high-quality and curriculum compliant assessment artefacts. Employing a narrative approach, it systematically retraces the processes followed in enacting the assessment items and tests quality assurance procedures. Of interest is how the lessons learned from the enactment of the item pool and tests quality assurance processes could inform the development of assessment literacy for language teachers. It is argued, in this context, that the enhancement of language teachers' assessment or testing capacities could go a long way in bootstrapping their resourcefulness in utilising their language assessment or testing literacy (knowledge and skills) to support teaching and learning in a test or testing orientated (and dominated) South African assessment regime.

Keywords: language assessment literacy; test; testing; assessment literacy