

CBT AS A TOOL OF ASSESSMENT FOR MCQ BASED COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION

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INTRODUCTION:

Tests are educational assessments intended to measure one's knowledge, skill, aptitude, in a particular area. A test may be administered verbally, on paper, on a computer, or in a predetermined area that requires a test taker to demonstrate or perform a set of skills.

Tests may vary in style, rigor and requirements. There is no general consensus or invariable standard for test formats and difficulty. Often, the format and difficulty of the test is dependent upon the educational philosophy of the need, instructor, subject matter, purpose of recruitment, class size, policy of the educational institution, and requirements of accreditation or governing bodies and also purpose of conduction.

ASSESSMENT OF MCQ BASED COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION:

Competitive exams are a type of examination conducted to test and rank candidate according to their grades, percentage, or percentile. These exams are mostly conducted at the state or central level. Competitive exams in India are conducted for various fields like engineering, medicine, law, teacher eligibility tests, UG and PG admissions also. These exams are mostly conducted whenever needed and millions of individuals appear for these exams. The idea of such exams is to select deserving and worthy candidates by making them appear for the exam in a fair and unbiased setting.

A competitive exam helps select candidates for the various job strata. Selected candidates from these tests are trained for jobs in their respective fields. They are conducted at various levels. These tests are also conducted at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. JEE Mains, JEE Advanced, NEET, and CLAT are some competitive exams that students appear for after the completion of their 12th class exams to take admissions in undergraduate courses. Civil Services Exams, NDA Exams, NEET-PG, etc are some exams students can appear for after their graduation. Nowadays recruitment is also based on MCQ testing. Such exams in India are highly competing and require time and effort to clear.

A multiple-choice question (MCQ) are composed of stem that identifies the question or problem, and a set of alternatives or possible answers that contain a key that is the best answer to the question, and a number of distracters that are plausible but incorrect answers to the question. Students respond to MCQs by indicating the alternative that they believe

best answers or completes the stem. There are many advantages to using MCQs for assessment. One key advantage is that the questions are easy to mark and can even be scored by a computer, which makes them an attractive assessment approach for large classes. Well designed MCQs allow testing for a wide breadth of content and objectives and provide an objective measurement of aspirant ability.

To assess aspirants of various competitive fields, right now we have two modes of tests, that is computer based test (CBT) and paper pencil tests.

Paper-and-pencil mode of assessment:

It is one of traditional mode of assessment formats such as written tests and also to standardized tests that ask candidates to use pencils/ pen to fill in bubbles on a scannable answer sheet. In the classrooms or in competitive tests paper-and-pencil assessment frequently refers to tests scored objectively, which are meant to measure memorized knowledge Paper-and-pencil test can either be selected response or constructed-response types. Selected-response items ask performer to select the correct answer from a list of options included in the item.

Many school based tests, KPSC, UPSC, NEET, KCET, teacher recruitment tests, university entrance tests likewise many tests are being conducted by paper pencil mode. The biggest advantage is that it lets an applicant skip a few questions in the course of writing the answers and get back to them at any point in time before the submission of the answer paper.

Computer-based tests (CBT) mode of assessment:

Computer-based examination has rightly increased, given the post-pandemic challenges. CBT provides a scaffold by minimizing the administrative burden of conducting examinations , reducing the time and effort that would otherwise be consumed on the laborious process of setting up examination centers, printing and distributing exam papers, and other overheads.

JEE mains, CUCET, CTET, banking recruitment, and many more are dependent on CBT mode of assessment.

In computer-based testing (CBT), computer technology is employed, which means the candidates use computers to answer questions presented on the monitor. The test-taker submits the answer using a keyboard or a mouse. The computer which the test taker is using can be referred to as a client computer. In contrast, the computer used for delivering the exam while being connected on an intranet/internet is referred to as a server computer. Therefore, computer-based exams take place in a client-server environment.

The appeal of online CBT lies in its functionality to streamline how educational assessments, certifications, or pre-employment tests are conducted in multiple ways.

CBT may or may not be connected to a server on the intranet/internet and may act as standalone testing. Once the exam is over, the result can be transferred online to a web server or locally stored on the computer's hard disk.

Benefits of using computer-based tests over paper pencil tests:

Computer-based testing can be used most effectively for several academic purposes, certifications tests, or during pre-employment screening processes that have examinations (assessments) as one of the decisive rounds to screen out applicants. Moreover, for corporate, such tests can enable management to develop pathways for employees' career progressions. Learning and development departments can also leverage online CBTs to identify employees' strengths and weaknesses and design appropriate training programs for holistic workforce development.

Computer-based tests have various advantages over traditional examination methods. From conducting exams to delivering reports, computer-based exams have made the examination process smoother than ever. Besides, computer-based tests offer multiple benefits to candidates and administrators in administering, grading and scaling up the process.

Most convenient as Computer-based tests can be conducted all year round. Aspirant can take tests at a time and place of their choosing. They do not need to travel to a particular physical location to write an exam, enabling candidates from far-off areas to give their test.

Security features inherent in computer-based testing to ensure that the test integrity is maintained. In addition, online proctoring and various available security features make CBT a highly secure mode of assessment.

When social distancing and restricted traveling are globally accepted norms in the wake of the ongoing pandemic, conducting online exams from any corner of the world has given hope to authorities.

Computer-based examination can be conveniently hosted on a robust CBT exam platform; it can be conducted simultaneously for multiple candidates irrespective of their locations. Auto grading feature of computer-based tests eliminates the scope of human error and the hassle of allotting evaluation duties. In addition, multiple-choice questions can be auto-graded easily, helping institutions to churn out real-time reports. It also saves considerable time in evaluating a large number of answer sheets.

Conclusion:

Computer adaptive testing is yet another milestone of the assessment technology, providing an effective means to assess aspirants' abilities more precisely. CBT Saves time and energy but paper pencil tests need more time for assessment.

One of the serious downsides of paper pencil test is that you have to figure out the easy questions and the difficult questions on your own. As a result, you are likely to spend more time in figuring out the easy questions due to which, you may end up running out of time.

Option scanning machine which marks the answers does not take the stray pencil marks and circles into account. Due to this, you may not get the marks for the questions that you answered correctly.

Today we have maximum competitive MCQ based examinations like JEE mains, banking recruitment exams, classroom performance tests, teacher eligibility tests, admission entrance tests like CUCET like many more assessment tests are conducted on CBT mode.

Abbreviations:

CBT : computer based test.

MCQ: multiple choice questions

NTA: national testing agency

JEE: joint entrance examination

NEET: national eligibility cum entrance test

CUCET: central universities common entrance test

CTET: central teacher eligibility test