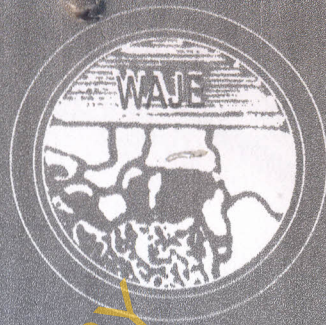


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## Notes on Contributors

1. Dr. Remi Bamisaye is a Lecturer in the Department of Teacher Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
2. Mrs. E. A. Emeke is a Research Fellow in the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
3. Dr. T. W. Yoloje is a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
4. Dr. Ifeoma Isiugo-Abanihe is a Research Fellow in the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
5. Dr. Rosaline Opeke is a Lecturer in the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
6. Mr. Charles V. Abe is a Junior Research Fellow in the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
7. Dr. M. A. Alaromi is a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
8. Adebayo Olabisi is a Lecturer in the Department of Teacher Education Technical, The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Satellite Campus, Saki.
9. Dr. Mary I. Izevbaye is a Lecturer in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

## Editorial

The Editors are happy to be able to produce this issue of *The West African Journal of Education* although we have, for reasons beyond our control, produced it well behind schedule. We are hoping that we shall overcome our problems before long and be able to produce the journal regularly.

One of the major problems of journal production in Nigeria is that the audience for which journals are targeted do not seem to patronise such journals and one may, therefore, say that they do not read journals. Unless journals are read, they will not be able to achieve their objective which, in the case of *The West African Journal of Education*, is to provide a medium for the exchange of information on education at all levels. The Editors, therefore, appeal to teachers, researchers, officials of ministries of education and parents to patronise *The West African Journal of Education*. They will find this issue, like the previous issue, interesting and illuminating.

The eight articles in this issue cover various aspects of education and they have practical implications for learners, teachers, education policy makers and parents.

Discipline is one of the major problems in Nigeria today. The level of discipline in Nigerian schools is acknowledged to be low. It has been manifested in the behaviour of students, many of whom are uncontrollable. They learn little at school as a consequence and, therefore, resort to examination malpractices which have become rampant in Nigerian schools. Bamisaye who has analysed the concept of discipline in educational theory and practice, has not only defined discipline, she also has discussed how discipline can be acquired and how it could be maintained. She expressed the view that a man who fails to exhibit appropriate positive behaviour cannot be said to be educated. She concluded that "an educated person is not only a master of his discipline in the academic or professional sense, he is also a disciplined person from the behavioural perspective".

The relationship between anxiety and learning has been a popular topic in research. Studies have shown that excessive anxiety is not an

uncommon symptom among secondary school pupils and students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Findings of studies would seem to have established that anxiety is an indication of maladjustment and a cause of failure in school. Emeke and Yoloye in their discussion of Cognitive Change Procedure in Resolving Text Anxiety in Students, have highlighted some of the procedures for reducing test anxiety in students which if followed could help students to "deal effectively with any situation that leads to test anxiety and other problem situations".

Language is recognised as an important factor in learning and achievement in school. In Nigeria, English Language which is the medium of instruction has been identified as a major educational problem because of the generally low proficiency of Nigerian students in the English language. The tendency has been for teachers to concern themselves only with teaching the content of their subject of specialisation while they leave the teaching of comprehension and other aspects of the English Language to the language teacher. Isiugo-Abanihe found that content area reading instructional strategies led to improvement in comprehension and retention. She presents sources of reading difficulty in the science text and describes a content-area reading instructional strategy which could be used to overcome some of the reading problems. Isiugo-Abanihe concluded with the recommendation that science teachers and other content-area teachers should view reading development in different subjects as an absolute necessity. Fortunately, the task is facilitated by the existence of instructional strategies.

Opeke discusses the concept of teaching as a facilitative process in which the child learns how to learn and presents the school library media resource centre as the nerve centre for the teaching-learning process. She has also discussed the main features and uses of resource materials in school library media resource centre, in the teaching of science, mathematics and technology.

Abe recommends the adoption of modular instruction in primary schools in order to ensure effective teaching in primary schools. He argues that there is great advantage in the use of modules for teaching in primary schools.

Araromi discusses some approaches to the teaching of French literature in Nigerian secondary schools. Adebayo surveys the common

core activities in the training of a technical education teacher in Nigeria.

In an empirical study, Izevbaye attempted to determine the manner of communication behaviour of women executives as they interact with their subordinates. She found that female managers' style did not allow for free flow of information and that female managers did not exhibit patterns of communication in accordance with societal expectation.

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# Cognitive Change Procedure in Resolving Test Anxiety in Students

MRS. EMEKE E.A. AND DR. YOLOYE T.W.

## INTRODUCTION

Test anxiety could be described along the (A-state) definition of anxiety as exemplified by Spielberger et al (1970) who viewed anxiety as "a consciously perceived dispositional feeling which fluctuates with situation." Thus test anxiety could be regarded as perceived dispositional feeling which is activated and fluctuates as a result of test taking situation.

Although there are conflicting reports about the effect of anxiety on students' performance, anxiety is believed to be associated with tension, (Emeke, 1984), Olukotun (1988). Anxiety is regarded as a state of apprehension, tension or uneasiness which stems up from the anticipation of danger (Sarason & Mandler 1972). Anxiety is also found to be associated with fear, shame and guilt (Bakare 1986); state of uneasiness (Goldfried 1978); tensed emotion to escape or avoid danger (Foa and Kozah 1986); state of agitation (Bakare 1986).

High test-anxious students also perform poorly in their tests and examinations according to Amadi (1986), Yoloye (1988), Adeyoju (1989). From the previous assertions and studies, it becomes abundantly evident that test-anxiety has a negative and thwarting effect on the effort and performance of students.

Anxiety has been found to affect even the physiological and psychological state of the individual. In some cases there could be tremor of the limbs, sweating of the hand and fore-head and blushing of the neck and face. There could also be changes in the heart beat and increase in the blood pressure. Pacing round the room, inability to sit in a chair, inability to relax (restlessness), increase in the rate of speech and even sudden 'mental block' and forgetfulness are some of the general overt behaviour due to anxiety. These overt behaviours, associated with test-anxiety are likely to affect students' performance. The question that could be asked is "What do we do as teachers, or counselling psychologists in various educational institutions to relieve students of test anxiety?"

Although there are many therapeutic or counselling approaches like psychoanalysis, client - centered therapy, operant method, aversion, auto-suggestion, existential methods etc that can be used, the cognitive change method is the subject of discussion in this paper. This is because of the preference of the authors for this therapeutic as well as the tested efficiency of the method as recorded by Ellis, 1962, Goldfried and Davidson (1976); Goldfried (1978); Yoloye (1988); Adeyoju (1989); Morakinyo (1984).



## Cognitive change method in perspective

Cognitive Change Method with its synonym Cognitive Restructuring, has its basis in the Cognitive Theory as propounded by German psychologists - Kohler, Koffka and Wertheimer - between 1910 and 1930, and developed upon by psychologists like Bruner, (1966) Hendrickes (1972), Mischel et al (1973) and Adeyoku (1989) to mention but a few.

Cognitive theorists are concerned with the factors which influence the ways in which man perceives things, situations, ideas and relationships and the effect this perception has on memory, learning and the overall individual's behaviour. Cognitive theory calls attention to the fact that man has the potential to be fully aware of all his sensations, thoughts, emotions and perceptions, and that many things are learnt when facts, ideas, events and situations are presented in particular ways. Human beings according to Cognitive theorists, possess an innate tendency to bring coherence and stability to their perception of situations, and as a result, learning can take place, or a shift in position and attitude can occur when the individual understands the cause-effect relationships of situations.

Since man oftentimes is not disturbed by the events that happen to him, but by the way he perceives the event (Ellis, 1962, Goldfried and Davidson 1976; Goldfried, 1978), man can then have irrational beliefs, expectations and assumptions, which may need to be changed in order to help him ameliorate the emotional disturbance. This last assertion forms the rationale for Cognitive Change Method or Cognitive Restructuring.

Cognitive Change Method is a therapeutic technique which makes use of positive self-statements, arguments and evaluations to assist the individual realize irrationality in his thought pattern. Simply put, the method involves the teaching or training of people on how to "think straight", have rational and logical thinking as opposed to having irrational and illogical thinking and making of unwise decisions.

Irrational and illogical thinking lead to unhappiness, incompetence, emotional and psychological disturbance. All past illogical learning and negative experiences can lead to and promote irrational thinking about many things including tests and examinations. Cognitive restructuring attempts to resolve these negative and self-defeating thoughts and emotions, through a re-organization of perception and thinking, so that thinking or cognition becomes logical and rational.

Our major concern in this paper is to highlight the procedural steps that are involved in applying the Cognitive Change Therapeutic Method in resolving test - anxiety in students. It is also our belief that through the use of this process, the test anxiety of many students could be resolved and they would perform better in their tests and examinations.

### Procedure For Applying Cognitive Change Method On Test Anxious Student

Cognitive change or rational restructuring could be applied on group or on indi-

vidual basis. The steps in cognitive change include:

- (i) General orientation
- (ii) Problem definitions and overview of irrational assumptions
- (iii) Generation of alternatives
- (iv) Teaching the client to modify his assumption and to make decision
- (v) Verification.

### General Orientation

In applying rational cognitive change to individual or group of test anxious students, the counsellor should explain in general term the underlying assumptions or irrational beliefs, as well as rational restructuring or cognitive change.

Explanation should be made on

- (a) the recognition that the problematic situations comprise a normal aspect of living,
- (b) the need to believe that one can actively make efforts to cope with such situation,
- (c) the readiness to recognise problematic situations as they occur,
- (d) the determination to inhibit the temptation to act irrationally.

Goldfried and Goldfried (1975) believed that it may not be straight forward to recognise problematic situation and make effort to cope with such situation and or inhibit irrational thoughts. They asserted that one recognises that he is in a problematic situation only by the virtue of the fact that he is upset about something. They wrote that upon realising that there is a problem,

“One’s task is to refocus attention from the emotional state to the situation creating the upset ..... If a situation is truly problematic and if an effective solution is not immediately apparent - engage in the actual problem-solving process without first stopping to think”.

-p. 105

The counsellor therefore needs to explain the problem of anxiety and the irrational view of the student on how he has interpreted the situation in which he is anxious. It may be that he has gone through unpleasant experiences or he has simply perceived other peoples’ experiences as unpleasant. This could create tension or the thought that such unpleasantness will happen to him as an individual. That the individual will fail, that others will perform better, that enough efforts have not been put to reading and learning are some of the irrational and illogical thinkings that the counsellor should encourage the individual to stop. The Counsellor orientates the student that

the programme of test anxiety reduction is quite different from how to study effectively. *Also that if the student doesn't study he will definitely be anxious about his test and performance.*

### **Problem Definition and Overview of Irrational Assumptions**

Explanation should be made about such irrational thoughts like

- (i) It is dire necessity for an individual to be loved or be approved by virtually every significant other person including parents, friends, children and adults in the community or school;
- (ii) The notion that one should be thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving in all possible respects if one is to consider himself worthy;
- (iii) It is awful and catastrophic when things differ from the way one would very much like them to be;
- (iv) If something is or perceived as dangerous, fearsome or going to miss its target one should keep dwelling on the possibility of its occurring;
- (v) There is invariably a right, precise, and perfect solution to human problems and that it is catastrophic, if this correct solution is not found.

All these and many more irrational and illogical thinkings are the underlying factors and the origin or 'genesis' of individual's response to situation including test-anxiety. Thus two students may enter the same test-taking situation but with two different attitudes or beliefs. One of them could believe that he has the same opportunity and has put in effort just like the others and he will tell himself that "everything will be alright", while the other person will tell himself that he is not competent and that the test will end in catastrophe and thereby he will not be loved by people etc. It is certain that for the second student, anxiety will set in.

The counsellor helps the student to learn how to define his problems in specific terms and in details. He must learn to exclude irrelevant aspects of his problems and focus on those that probably if resolved are likely to reduce the problem, which essentially is test anxiety. By designing and reflecting on the details of the situations leading to the problem, the direction of the problem-solving, (which is resolving test anxiety through cognitive change) becomes more clearly identified.

The individual student should know that what he or she has been telling himself is what is making him anxious. The individual should remember the dates or occasion, describe the actual situation and the irrational thoughts that caused the anxiety. The individual could also rate the anxiety level from zero to one hundred (0 to 100).

### **Generation of Alternative**

Here the counsellor or educator helps the anxious student in general terms to outline and plan a course of action as solutions to the problems as well as putting the

plans into use. There is a sort of brainstorming and generation of alternatives. The more alternatives generated, the greater the likelihood that good ones will be included within the list. Morakinyo (1984), Akinboye (1984), and Yoloye (1988) have all pointed to this.

The student is encouraged to think about many possibilities, no matter how unintelligent, silly or even illogical these alternatives may appear to be. The counsellor should try as much as possible to write down all these alternatives. In some cases with the permission of the student a tape recording could be done.

The student should not worry about the specific solution or how he should apply the suggested solution at this stage. A wide range of suggestions could come into the students' mind. This could include relaxing his mind, not thinking about the consequence of failing examination; putting more effort to his study and developing confidence that he will pass his tests and examination just like any other student.

The counsellor should encourage the anxious student to talk freely, not to have any inhibition or exclude anything that he (the student) may think could help him. However the counsellor should be appraising the alternative solutions generated by the anxious student, determine when most of the 'potent' solutions have been listed and have in mind that there is the need to exclude the 'tangent' solutions suggested by the student. It should be borne in mind that the list of possible and alternative solutions may not always be exhaustive. However, once the counsellor determines that potent alternatives and possible solutions are on the list of the alternatives he quickly moves on to the phase of decision making.

### **Teaching Students to Modify Assumption and Make Decision**

Before any decision is made there should be evaluation of the utility of any of the previous alternatives generated. That is, the likelihood that the alternative selected will solve the problem should be examined before a decision is made to adopt it. The consequence of elimination or deciding on a particular solution should be considered by the student and the counsellor.

Decision making is one of the most difficult things to do by people. This is basically so because nobody could predict the future all the time and two or more alternatives may look plausible. However after considering the most plausible alternatives, each student should be able to select one which seems more likely to yield the best result.

The student after selecting the plausible alternative of actions and thoughts should now embark on the process of modification. The specific action and rational thought that will replace the irrational and illogical ones begin with the imagination of the situations that present the best anxiety in the student. The student also matches the alternative he has selected with such situation that causes the anxiety.

For example, a student's irrational thoughts may commence when examination is approaching and this may be the cause of his anxiety. His initial thought may be that he will fail the test. But he may now decide that he will put in more effort and develop

confidence. To achieve this, he may now start to read more than before, cover all the aspects of the course or subject and prepare himself for any type of questions that could be presented. He can ask himself such question like: "Do other students have two heads?" Once he can assure himself that others are not better than himself he will start to develop confidence in himself.

This situation and the process of arriving at decisions and solutions by the test-anxious individual may not be as easy as this. Hence the counsellor using Cognitive Restructuring Strategy often uses logic, reasoning, suggestion, persuasion, confrontation, de-indoctrination, indoctrination and prescription of activities in order to make the student adjust to tests and examinations or any other problems.

Studies like those of Hill, Thames and Rardin, (1979) and Yoloje, (1992) have pointed to the fact that what makes Cognitive Restructuring approach or Cognitive Change Method more effective on anxiety or other problems is because of the in-depth information given, direct guidance involved, minimal encouragers needed, apt interpretations, and close questioning. The approach is more persuading and more didactic. For example, the counsellor could ask the student to rate his anxiety level during test and examination. It is possible the student's rating is 90 out of 100. This rating in itself could be distorted and irrational. The counsellor could now ask that if he has rated ordinary test and examination as 90 what will he rate his anxiety if he actually fails the test or examination, or his final Junior Secondary School (JSS), Senior Secondary School (SSS) examination or his inability to pass Joint Matriculation Examination (JME). The counsellor could also ask about more disastrous and catasphrophic situations like failing totally and being asked to withdraw and drop out of the school. It is most likely that the student will be agigated and would want to change his initial rating of 90 to something lower. This is pat of Cognitive Restructuring, logical thinking and decision making where the process originated from. The student also actively carried out the alternatives he has decided upon, such as reading and not thinking in a negative way.

### Verification

In this stage, the student who has decided on some course of action should now act on his decision and then evaluate the extent to which the problem of test anxiety has been resolved. The student determines for himself whether or not the situation that causes test anxiety for him has stopped, as well as verifying the efficacy of the strategy or alternative he has adopted to resolve his anxiety.

If the test-anxious student is satisfied with the extent to which his selected alternative, decision and action have been able to resolve his test anxiety, then he has reached the stage of going into 'exit' the problem-solving process. In other words his selected alternative, decision and action have led to decrease in his test-anxiety level. If the alternative decision and action selected do not work then the individual returns to the stage of problem solving and resolving of his anxiety level. He now generates more alternatives, maks new decisions and embarks on new actions. The counsellor also

continues to teach the student to have logical and rational thinking.

## CONCLUSION

The Cognitive Change Procedure that has been described in this paper provides a framework for the individual who is anxious about test to think more logically and rationally in order to resolve his problem. The counsellor only teaches him in general terms on how to arrive at an effective way of doing this. The counsellor's guidance, support and encouragement enable the student to put the problem into better perspective through general orientation, problem definition and overview of irrational assumptions.

The individual generates plausible alternatives, modifies his assumption and makes decisions once he is now thinking rationally. Although some of these alternatives, decisions and actions may not be all that effective initially, but through further generation of alternatives, decisions and activities the individual's evaluation will assure him that he has resolved the anxiety.

Cognitive Change or Restructuring process provides the individual with the capacity to manage his own life, think logically and rationally. The counsellor only acts as a prop in the therapeutic sessions. Once an individual could follow the procedural steps highlighted in this paper he will be able to deal effectively with any situation leading to test anxiety or even other problematic situations.

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