



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

Writing questions for examination papers: a creative process?

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Paper presented at the 8th Biennial Conference of EARLI SIG 1 'Assessment and Evaluation', Munich, Germany, 24th to 26th August 2016.

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Abstract

The quality of examination questions is central to an effective and fair assessment system. However, not all aspects of the development of examination questions have received sufficient research attention. The limited relevant research available treats question writing primarily as a cognitive process overlooking the social dimension it entails. Building on this research, this study examined question writing from a socio-cognitive perspective. Through employing a range of qualitative methods including observation, stimulated recall and interviews with seven question writers, it attempted to develop a situated understanding of the process by taking into account the influence of the surrounding context (e.g. intended audience). Drawing on the findings of this investigation, this paper focuses on the nature of question writing and specifically on the theme of creativity. It describes question writing as a decision-making task and, through identifying decisions made by question writers, seeks to delimit the freedom and agency of question writers.