
A NEW TYPE TESTING QUESTION

CLARENCE M. PRUITT, Oklahoma A. and M. College, Stillwater

Three years ago in a "physical science survey" course we began the use of a new type of testing question which we have designated as the "zero" question. The zero question can be used effectively in multiple-choice type of testing items, matching questions, identifying parts of diagrams and drawings, and so on. In the multiple-choice type of item, the zero question means no answer is correct, and the student writes "zero" as the answer. In the case of matching questions on identifying parts of a diagram, the sentence or phrase corresponds to no part or is unrelated to the diagram.

Test results indicate definitely that the use of zero questions adds significantly not only to question difficulty, but to test difficulty. The zero question calls for more critical analysis than does the usual multiple choice question. In a series involving 10,297 students, the mean score made was 57.4 percent (and this mean scoring included the zero questions). On the zero questions given in the same papers, the mean score was 41.29 percent.

SUMMARY

Zero questions would seem to increase the difficulty of multiple-choice questions, matching questions, and identifying parts of diagrams. The question is applicable to any type of subject matter, is entirely objective, and calls for greater discrimination by the student.
