ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
The purpose of assessment in primary school is to provide information on the performance of a child at a point in time over the school year. Assessment gives teachers a better awareness of what pupils know and understand. It is important to know what their learning experiences will enable them to do and what their skills and personal capabilities are. This paper observed that assessment of pupils' ability in the modern time has been focusing on cognitive ability leaving out other two domains, affective and psychomotor unattended to. It explores the reasons why assessment for learning in primary school is imperative for achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. The paper concluded that the educational process should be tailored towards achieving desirable changes in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. It therefore recommended that teachers should develop and use assessment measures that are appropriate to the level of children in their respectful schools and classes such that every individual is sufficiently equipped to contribute his or her quotas to overall national development.

Keywords: *Assessment, Educational Assessment, Sustainable Development, Primary Education*

Introduction

Assessment in primary school is viewed as building a picture over time of a child's learning progress across the curriculum and as an integral part of teaching and learning. The purpose of assessment is to gather relevant information about student performance or progress, or to determine student interests to make judgments about their learning process (Matthew, 2016). There can be no country and no school that is not subjected to the sway of assessment neither there are pupils,

teachers or families who do not accept its importance. It is important to note that the major goal of educational system is to develop the potentials of individuals with a view to achieving overall national development.

Assessment has become most significant areas of interest in educational policy development. Schools need to ensure that there is continuity and progression within and across each phase of the primary school which will build their capacity for contributing to quality assessment (DENI, 2010). Adikwu, Obinna and Amali (2014) reacted to the apparent declining rate of educational standard in education and identified some factors that resulted into the abysmal performance resulting in educational assessment. The factors identified are ethical and legal issues, problems associated with continuous assessment, assessment techniques, environment situation, poor funding, validity and reliability of instruments.

Educational assessment is necessary to drive societal growth, just as in developing countries in which Nigeria belongs especially when there is increasing significance which education has for national development. Each classroom teacher is responsible for his/her own pupils' progress and achievement so teachers are advised to use a variety of assessment methods to support them in assessing pupils' learning and in making decisions about their future learning. The purpose of assessment in primary schools is to provide information on the performance of a child at a point in time. (e.g testing) or over the school year (report card template). The results are used to plan on-going learning and whole school evaluation.

Achievement at a particular level is not a pre-requisite for advancement to the next class. Assessment for learning takes place when the teacher shares information about the child's learning with the child and when the teacher uses this information to plan the next steps in their teaching and in the pupils learning. Since assessment gives teachers a better awareness of what pupils know and understand, it is important to know what their learning experiences enable them to do and what their skills and personal capabilities are but in the modern time, assessment of student's ability has been focusing on cognitive ability leaving out other two domains, affective and psychomotor unattended to (DENI, 2010).

In order to achieve overall national development, the educational process should be tailored towards achieving desirable changes in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain, such that every individual is sufficiently equipped to contribute his or her quotas to overall national development. This paper explores the reasons why assessment for learning in primary school is imperative for achievement of Sustainable Development goals.

Assessment

The term assessment is generally used to refer to all activities teachers use to help students learn and to gauge student progress. Stassen (2001) defined assessment as 'the systematic collection of information to improve learning". Assessment is an integral part of instruction, as it determines whether or not the goals of education are being met. Assessment is a key professional competence for teachers that enable them to make learning and teaching more effective.

Assessment can focus on individual learner, the learning community, a course, an academic programme, the institution, or the educational system as a whole. Assessment affects decision making about grades, placement, instructional materials, curriculum, and in some cases funding. Assessment can be divided for the sake of convenience using the following categorizations:

1. Initial, formative, summative and diagnostic assessment.
2. objective and subjective
3. referencing (criterion referenced and norm-referenced)
4. informal and formal
5. internal and external

Educational Assessment

Educational assessment is the systematic process of documenting and using empirical data on the knowledge, skill, attitude and improve student learning. Assessment data can be obtained from directly examining student work to assess the achievement of learning outcome.

As a continuous process, assessment establishes measurable and clear student learning outcomes for learning, provisioning a sufficient amount of learning opportunities to achieve these outcomes, implementing a systematic way of gathering, analyzing and interpreting

evidence to determine how well student learning matches expectations and using the collected information to inform improvement in student learning.

There are many definitions of assessment as we have educational assessment. The focal point of their definitions is that:

> *Assessment is used to provide a summary of what the student has achieved at fixed points, such as at the end of a period of study, or when a unit of work is completed, or at the end of an academic year (Atanlogun, 2003). Assessment is the ongoing process of gathering, analyzing and interpreting, using and reflecting on data to make informed and constant judgments about learner's progress and achievement to improve learning (2001). Assessment is a key component of learning because it helps student learn. When students are able to see how they are doing in a class, they are able to determine whether or not they understand course materials (Atanlogun, 2003). It also helps teachers to see if their teaching has been effective. In order to ensure all round development of the child, a range of assessment approaches can be used at various stages in the learning sequence*

Types of evaluation
1. Placement assessment: Placement assessments measure knowledge and skills in reading comprehension, English writing and mathematics. The results are used to place some incoming students into courses that best match their skills and helps improve student success.
2. Formative assessment: It refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. Formative assessments help teachers identify concepts that students are struggling to understand, skills they are having difficulty acquiring, or learning standards they have not yet achieved so that adjustments can be made to lessons, instructional techniques, and academic support.

3. Summative assessment: are used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Generally speaking, summative assessments are defined by three major criteria.
4. Diagnostic assessment: are used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Generally speaking, summative assessments are defined by three major criteria. Diagnostic tests help to tell the teacher (and the student) how much they know and don't know about an upcoming topic.
5. Evaluative assessment: Evaluative assessment refers to those measures designed to ensure that an education system is functioning well, including concerns about school and system performance.

Purpose of assessment
The purposes of assessment are as follows:
1. To determine the effectiveness of a sequence of instruction.
2. It helps to anticipate what pupils will actually take from their classroom experiences and this might be quite different from what was intended.
3. It helps teachers find out what has actually taken place in pupil's developing understanding during a sequence of teaching and learning.

Assessment Practice
As earlier discussed, assessment is the ongoing process of gathering, analyzing and interpreting, using and reflecting on data to make informed and constant judgments about learner's progress and achievement to improve learning. The key to sound assessment is to relate the assessment procedures as directly as possible to the specific learning outcomes being assessed. Assessment practice in education and care can be arranged into three categories: assessment of learning

and development; assessment for learning and development and assessment as learning though our focus is on assessment for learning.

Assessment may be in form of formal and informal. The formal may be regarded as the cognitive aspect, while the informal is regarded as the affective and psychomotor domain. The formal assessments typically involve reliable and valid standardised testing (Brown and Rolfe, 2005). The informal assessment, on the other hand includes non-standardised testing and the performance on these assessments is not compared with other children (Brown and Rolfe, 2005).

Various assessment procedures can be employed for these domains. They typically include interviews with children and work sampling and observation techniques such as running records, anecdotal records, checklists, rating scales, event and time sampling (MacNaughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; NAEYC, 2009). All of these assessment tools are designed to gather information about the progress of children's learning and development and are used to make children's learning and development visible (Tayler, Tuffin, Burton, Eley and Cowan, 2008).

A cognitive assessment will give a profile of an individual's strengths and difficulties in relation to their learning, as it can provide a snapshot of how they are doing at that time in a controlled way. Cognitive abilities tend to remain stable throughout an individual's childhood and adult life meaning that it is possible to use it as a predictor of an individual's academic potential.

Assessment for Learning
Assessment for learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there (ARG, 2008). Assessment for learning involves using assessment in the classroom to raise pupils' achievement. It is based on the idea that pupils will improve most if they understand the aim of their learning.

Effective assessment for learning happens all the time in the classroom and focuses on how pupils can improve their learning. The continuous process of dialogue and interaction between teachers, pupils and peers is essential. It involves peer and self-assessment (ARG, 2008; Black and Wiliam, 2009).

Gullo (2005) states the need for continuous assessment and stressed that continuous assessment occurs when children are assessed over time with the view of tracking their progress. Baldwin, Adams and Kelly (2009) highlight the importance of continuous assessment for the purposes of making decisions about individual development, learning programmes and further assessment.

Copple and Bredekamp (2006) also agreed that ongoing assessment of children' progress is central to planning and helps teachers to know the pupils with whom they work.

Guiding Principles of Assessment for Learning
The guiding principles for learning are as follows:
- It should be part of effective planning
- It should focus on how pupils learn
- It should be central to classroom practice
- It should be a key professional skill
- It should be sensitive and constructive
- It should foster motivation
- It should promote understanding of goals and criteria. It should help learners know how to improve
- It should develop the capacity for self-assessment; and
- It should recognise all educational achievement.(ARG, 2008)

Strategies of Assessment for Learning support in classroom practice:
- Focus on learning by sharing learning intentions and success criteria with pupils.
- Effective questioning encourages pupils to think about their learning.
- Quality formative feedback allows teachers to identify pupils' achievements, any gaps in their learning, and areas for further work (what learners have done well and what they should do to perform better).
- Scaffolding reflection gives pupils time to reflect on their learning, allowing them to think about what and how they are learning and to adapt their approaches, if necessary, to achieve their goals.
- Teacher reflection on effectiveness of teaching and learning allows teachers to verify what their pupils have learned. This

helps them decide what they may need to teach again in a different way, or how to focus future teaching plans. (A Practical Guide CCEA, 2009).

Primary Education

Primary education is the foundation of formal education. It is an essential component in the echelon of educational system of every nation. In order to qualify for other levels of education one must first pass through primary schools, as such it is an institution upon which all other levels of education and educational achievements are built. It prepares the mind and trains the child for higher and tougher academic pursuits. It provides young learners with the fundamentals of reading, writing, skill acquisition, information and attitudes necessary for proper adjustment into the society. Unfortunately, though not all recipients of primary education get to other levels (Adikwu, Obinna and Amali 2014).

Primary education begins at around age 5 for the majority of Nigerians. Pupils spend six years in primary school and graduate with a school-leaving certificate. Before 1976, education policy was still largely shaped by the colonial policy. In 1976, the universal primary education programme was established.

This programme faced a lot of difficulties and was subsequently revised in 1981 to 1990. The universal basic education, UBE, came as a replacement of the universal primary education and intended to enhance the success of the first nine years of schooling. Oky (2004) stated that Nigeria was given a very low rating in human development programme (UNDP) for the 2002.

This will hinder Nigeria to achieve contribution of people to national development activities. The Nigeria education had been bedeviled with many problems in which poor assessment is one of them. And it is only through assessment can one be able to estimate the effectiveness of an educational enterprise and such monitoring assessment is often not done.

Primary Education for Sustainable Development

In developing a set of guiding principles for innovative assessment, it is important to note that by 2030, all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development, and

sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender, equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of culture diversity and of cultures contribution to sustainable development.

With regards to the future of education, a lot has been achieved and many needs have been met but research has revealed that there is much still to be done to achieve quality education for all. In this modern age, pupils need to know not the basic reading and arithmetic skills, but also skills that will allow them to face a world that is continually changing. Pupils needs require new learning goals, these new learning goals will change the relationship between assessment and instruction.

UNESCO (2014) indicated that its aims to improve access to quality education on sustainable development at all levels and in all social contexts, to transform society by reorienting education and help people develop knowledge, skills, values and behaviours needed for sustainable development. It is about including sustainable development issues, such as climate change and biodiversity into teaching and learning. Individuals are encouraged to be responsible actors who resolve challenges, respect cultural diversity and contribute to creating a more sustainable world.

And that the number of out-of-school children of primary school age has fallen almost by half to 57 million. The GMR (UNESCO, 2014) also presents an impressive array of evidence of how education transforms lives.

Education reduces poverty, boosts job opportunities and fasters economic prosperity. It also increases people's chances of leading a healthy life, deepens the foundations of democracy and changes attitude to protect the environment and empower women. (UNESCO, 2014).

The first years of primary school are considered to be critical and for this reason Education for All (EFA) and the universal completion of quality basic education directly support policies that seek to reduce poverty, improve livelihoods and secure sustainable societies both now and in the future.

While the provision of quality basic education is the goal of EFA, the underlying purposes and contents of education are either assumed or considered to be a matter of national priorities. Hence,

there is the need for educational assessment policy that considers how young people can lead informed, meaningful and transformative lives.

Assessment of Learning Outcome

Learning outcomes are valuable to learners. One of the keys to successful learning is the aligned curriculum (Biggs, 2003). This means that learning experiences are designed to assist student achievement of those outcomes, and carefully designed assessment tasks allow students to demonstrate achievement of those outcomes. They are statements that describe the knowledge or skills students should acquire by the end of a particular assignment, class, course, or programme and help students understand why that knowledge and these skills will be useful to them. Student learning outcomes articulate what a student should know or can do after completing a course or programme.

The assessments of student learning outcomes provide information that puts student learning at the forefront of academic planning processes. The focus on the context and potential application of knowledge and skills, help guide students connect learning in various contexts, and help guide assessment and evaluation. Learning outcomes emphasize the application and integration of knowledge. Instead of focusing on coverage of material, learning outcomes articulate how students will be able to employ the materials, both in the context of class and more broadly.

So, learning outcomes think first about what is essential that students known or be able to do after the course or programme In other words, what students need to know and could make powerful use of the enhance their lives and more effectively contribute to society.

What are 5 learning outcomes?
- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of well being
- Children are confident and involved learners.
- Children are effective communicators.

Implication of assessment for learning in Primary Education to Sustainable Development

Effective assessment values cultural perspectives of children's learning. A child's learning and development is informed by his or her culture, values and experiences. Moreover, cultural background and language significantly influence the knowledge and vocabulary children have developed. Cultural background and language also frame how, and upon what, children can be appropriately assessed (Gullo, 2005). Professionals therefore need to be aware of children and their family's cultural context.

On this basis, Appl (2000) suggested that approaches used for assessing children need to be culturally sensitive and interesting to children. Using assessment tools that are culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate assists the assessment process to be authentic. Further, the assessment process is facilitated when children's interests and daily activities are the base for collecting relevant evidence of the child's learning (Baldwin et al., 2009; Gullo 2005).

It is also important that professionals take account of children's cultural context when analysing and interpreting the assessment data, so that an accurate picture is developed. Education is targeted because the framework exists to assist individuals in acquiring, fostering, and demonstrating the specific knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed for making informed decisions and taking appropriate actions about the environment (UNESCO 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria like the rest of the countries of the world has strong desire for development. Today, more than ever before, it has become an indisputable fact that any nation that wants to achieve progress and development must of necessity pay serious attention to the development of its human resources and the key is education. Education must guide and nurture people to pursue sustainable livelihoods, to participate in democratic society and live in a sustainable manner. In achieving sustainable development goals, greater efforts are needed to understand and apply more alternative forms of assessment that serve as opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. This is because sustainable development objectives are a mixture of

cognitive and affective skills requiring students to collaborate on authentic tasks.

In order to achieve sustainable development goals, assessment for learning and development needs to take place continually, in more than one activity or setting and in order to generate a more accurate picture of each child's abilities, greater efforts are needed to understand and apply series of assessment that serve as opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. It is important to note that sustainable development objectives are a mixture of cognitive and affective skills requiring students to collaborate on authentic tasks.

However, current educational practices make it imperative that primary school teachers gain competence in assessment. Education must therefore, be properly tailored to the needs of the people and properly acquired. This is the only way to sustainable development. By gathering data across a period of time, teachers gather a complete picture of each child's capabilities and record change and growth over time (Allen, 2007). What is important is that teachers should develop and use assessment measures that are appropriate to the level of children in their respective schools and classes.

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