

ENHANCING CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION THROUGH ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES OF LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS

Dr. Auwalu Saminu

Department of Educational Psychology,
FCT College of Education, Zuba,
Abuja.

And

Dr. Tolorunleke Caroline Aduke

Department of Educational Psychology,
FCT College of Education, Zuba,
Abuja.

Abstract

This paper examines the means of enhancing creativity in education through assessment strategies of learning achievements. The paper highlighted on the indispensable need for assessment in teaching-learning processes at all levels of education in Nigeria. It discusses on the types of purposes, strategies and problems faced in assessment of teaching and learning its relation with the educational objectives and natural goals. Finally, the paper recommends that teachers should give valid, educative explicit, fair and comprehensive, assessments tasks to students. Opportunities for expression and brainstorming should be encouraged. Assessment process should be made practical and accessible to both students and teachers.

Educational assessment is integral part of the teaching and learning process, since the purpose of learning is to attain certain knowledge. These can be ascertained by evaluating the learning outcome. It is an important tool used to measure the knowledge, skills, competencies, attitude and value etc. the learners have serve different purposes at different levels of education. "Some assessment are used to determine the performance in terms of weakness and strength of student in the

achievement of educational objectives. Some are used for certification and placement," (Onihike cited by Badamus, 1999).

Education assessment differ at different levels of the educational system as seen by different bodies assigned to the responsibility. The Federal Government in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) has made educational assessment compulsory at all level of the educational system. As a result, government has emphasized the use of continuous

assessment in the primary, secondary school and tertiary institutions. This is to bring uniformity in educational assessment necessitated by the dissatisfaction or the general public on the then only end of year placement examination, which was the only assessment used to decide the fate of students.

Assessment is an integral of teaching and learning processes at all level of education in Nigeria. In itself, assessment is not value free. Therefore the processes in school (which usually emphasize student skills) should support the way of assessing the understanding of the learners. However, assessment has been beset with a lot of problem such that the qualities of examination are sometimes questionable. This has affected the integrity and quality of assessment in the present educational system. Some of these problems are associated with the teacher and the student themselves. This paper discusses the strategies for improving quality education through effective assessments of students learning achievements.

Type and Purpose of Assessments

After attaining set of instructional objectives, learners are evaluated (using test etc) to find out the extent to which they have attained the objectives of instruction. Ali (1990) defined a test “as an instrument or device used for finding out the presence or absence of a particular phenomenon being tested for”. Evaluation, which is sometime used interchangeably with assessment, judges the value of

something. Ali (1990) differentiates between measurements and evaluation. The first refers to “the quantitative description or numeral value obtained from testing” while the latter is the qualitative judgement made about a person or thing. Momoh (1997) considers assessments as ‘a process of calculating, judging or appraising value, quality or ability in terms of relative or absolute measurement’. Therefore educational assessments are the judgments of the value learners are expected to attain ‘upon completion of a set of educational objectives. Assessment can generally be formal and informal. Formal assessment involves the process of testing or measurement, such as examination administrated to students to measure their ability. Informal assessment, values are assigned by judgement.

Kellaghan(2000) categories assessment into four main levels: classroom-based assessment, school assessment; external or public assessments of national and international assessment of student achievements. He further explained these types of assessment in the following ways; classroom-based assessment is used to make decisions about instruction as learning occurs, and is designed to assess students’ learning. Such assessment is subjective, informal, immediate, and ongoing or continue. It is based on students’ performance in situations where students actually demonstrate proficiency. School assessment suggests that the responsibility for student success rests not only with the student also but also on the school system.

External or public examination assessments are basically used for selection for higher levels of education; and national assessments are basically used for selection for higher levels of education; and national assessment is designed to describe the level of achievement of the whole education system and of individual schools and in relation to standards set by national education bodies. International assessments of students achievements compare countries or regions.

The method and products of assessments used at different levels and for different purposes sometimes overlap. Thus, some of the tools regarded as suitable for classroom assessment are also used to national or international levels. The lower the level of assessment, the more likely that assessment will be formative and related to the ongoing process of learning, rather than summative. Formative evaluation gives a picture of student's skills and understanding. At any level, practical assessment tasks, (such as developmental assessment, performance assessment, etc), should be able to provide specific feedback to the learner on what he is needed to learn more and to learn from errors. Summative assessment which provides little more than a rank or a number do not provide specific feedback to a student. Feedback is essential in assessment of learning, and there are specific forms of feedback that are more beneficial than others, (Furnis, 2003).

The Kellaghan's classifications of assessments stated above can be

regrouped with respect to educational assessment into:

(i) **Assessment of skills and competence:** This is mostly carried out in practical or vocational courses and the sciences. This type of assessment enables learners to relate skills acquired to the environment, hence giving the learners the necessary working skills and competences needed in the society. It also prepares them for professional jobs in the larger society.

(ii) **Certification of students' achievement:** This type of assessment is used at the end of an educational program for knowing the level of achievement attained by the learners and for enabling them to proceed to the next level of learning, places of works etc. Faloyajo as cited by Badmus (1996) opines that the objective of certification assessment is to identify those students who have successfully completed a certain level of education for international and national bodies such as WAEC, NECO, etc usually conduct national certificate assessment examination for secondary school in all subjects across the country. Similarly tertiary institutions conduct certification assessment at their levels, such as the NCE and Pre-NCE Examination.

(iii) Other classifications of assessments are demonstration, which is used to assess practical skills of students; observation and rating of the learner by the examiner; practical examination, which is used to assess the skills acquired

by the learners. At any level, practical assessment tasks should be able to provide specific feedback to the learner on what he is required to learn.

Purposes of classroom, external, national and international assessments differ for each type of stakeholders. Furnis (2003) observes that some people may be interested to know the outcomes of learning. Students may want to know the extent of their learning; what they can do, and what they cannot and how to correct their mistakes. Families and societies may want to know if their children are learning and how useful the school is contributing to their life especially if there are competing demands for children's time and if schooling is an expensive activity. Teachers may want to know what the students are learning; and the school administrators may want to know if teachers are doing a good job. Educational systems in general may want to know if student learning is consistent with curriculum standards, if schooling is efficient and if students are well prepared for the challenges of life. International agencies may want to compare one country with others since they provide a larger context within which to interpret national results.

The main purpose of assessment at classroom level is to ascertain whether children have learnt what they ought to learn and how well they have done that. As Marzano et al (2001:96) states thus:

Simply telling students that their answer in a test is right or wrong has a negative effect on achievement. Providing students with the correct answer has

moderate effect size. The best feedback appears to involve an explanation as to what is accurate and what is inaccurate in terms of student responses. In addition, asking students to keep working on a task until they succeed appears to enhance achievement.

Educational assessments or evaluation help in determining the learning outcome of classroom instruction, that is, it clearly reveals the weakness and strength of the learners' after an instruction. Assessment also helps that teacher to present a realistic picture of the students' strengths and weakness in relation to the curriculum as to know the areas that may require reform or improvement. Badmus (1996) also opines that education assessment (such as the continuous assessment and final examination) provides sufficient information for student expectation in the sense that their good/positive performances in any assessment make them believe that they are developing themselves in a particular field of specialization or in an area of skills and competences. This serves as an indicator for the learners to either continue with the field or skill or change for the better, as his/her performance indicates. It is also used in career guidance of the learners. In a nutshell, therefore, educational assessment is used to measure learning achievement or skills acquisition in relation to educational objective in an area.

The Problems of Assessment

In spite of the fact that assessment is a vital tool for the realization of educational objectives and national goals, assessment is being faced with a lot of problems. These problems or factors that hinder the quality of assessment include: the teachers factor – the quality of the teachers who are the implementers and assessors of the curriculum; the students factor – who are the beneficiaries (their involvement in examination malpractice, etc); the misuse or wrong measuring instruments; lack of assessment experts; lack of adequate instructional materials to motivate and sustain the interest of the learners, the assessment or testing environment; motivation and the anxiety of the learners, etc (Badmus, 1999). Some of these problems are briefly discussed below;

The teachers' problem has to do with their quality in terms of educational assessment to determine students' achievement. In fact, research evidence has shown that the single most influential factor, next to parental involvement in students achievement (law test scores and attitude) in all subjects is conclusively linked to the quality of teaching and the expertise of the teacher (Osborne & Simon, 1996). Therefore, the teacher's factor is the greatest towards quality in educational assessment, since "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers" (FGN, 2004). Teacher assessment practices may be faulty with poorly focused questions, predominance of questions that require short answers, repetition rather than reflection, and they

may be influenced by the requirements of public examinations.

The problems faced by the students have to do with poor learning and assessment environments, such as lack of enough facilities and infrastructure, poor school administration, etc. As a result of these conditions and the importance attached to certification, students involve themselves in different forms of cheating in examinations. With new technological advancement examination malpractice now takes many forms and facets.

As a result of the aforementioned problems, individuals and the general public have lost confidence in the credibility of both internal and external assessments of learning achievements at all levels of the educational system. Therefore, there is the need for devising strategies that would enhance quality in the assessment of learning achievement.

Strategies for Improving Creativity through Assessment

To enhance quality in the assessment of learning achievements, the following strategies are proffered. The teachers' quality in terms of assessment procedures and materials should be given a priority. In order to improve the teachers' quality in this respect, measurement and evaluation (and related) courses at all levels of teachers training institution have to be emphasized. This is necessary because assessment courses in faculties of education in various universities are either inadequate or insufficient. As a result of this competent examiners with the required quality of

assessment in the related field of study are not produced (Awomolo cited by Badmus, 1999).

Another area that needs serious attention is proper evaluation of learning achievement in the schools. Presently, most of the school-based and national assessment of learning achievements lack credibility due to many problems, such as poor learning and examination environments, examination malpractices, poor administration, etc. All forms of cheating in examinations cannot be prevented completely, but stakeholders of education should make efforts to minimize their effects. The assessment of the learning objectives should be adequate and comprehensive so that learners are assessed in all the domains of educational objectives.

Transparency is essential in a good educational system. Parents, students and indeed the general population, have a right to know how schools are organized and what they produce. With this, learning achievement can be monitored by means of assessing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes/values pupils have gained.

There are various methods of assessment that teachers use to find out the learning achievement of students. Those which are assessable to all students and can really assess what students know and can do, and provide straightforward feedback, are more likely to be supportive of further learning. Teachers should give valid, educative, explicit, fair and comprehensive assessment tasks to students. The assessment process should

also be made practical and accessible to students and teachers.

Conclusion

Assessment has always been an important aspect of the educational system; since the national goals are reflected in educational goals. It becomes therefore, necessary to assess the educational goals achieved. Assessment are used for certification. Diagnosis and treatment, monitoring of the system, etc. Finally, Furnis (2003) posed some evaluative questions to those involved in the assessment of learning achievements to answer: What form of assessment is likely to have the greatest impact on students' learning? What kind of learning do we wish for foster? What steps are necessary to improve a system's ability to deliver effective type of assessment? And how will the information derived from an assessment be used? If these questions are honestly answered, the quality of our educational system will be enhanced.

Recommendations

In order to enhance creativity in education through assessment strategies for learning achievements, the paper recommends that:

1. Teachers should give valid, educative, explicit, fair and comprehensive, assessment tasks to students. Opportunities for expression and brainstorming should be encouraged.
2. For intermediate feedback, self-evaluation should be encouraged.
3. Help students to develop confidence and positive self-concept.

4. Assessment process should be made practical and accessible to both students and teachers.

References

- Ali, Anthony (1990). 'Brief on educational evaluation in Nigeria' in R.O. Ohuche (Ed). *Basic Measurement and Evaluation*. Onitsha. Africana-Fep Publishers Limited.
- Badamus, M.O. Madinat (1996) 'Practice and Problem in Continuous Assessment: An Application to Home Economic Programmes' in G.A. Badamus, & I.O. Peter (Eds). *Challenges of Managing Educational Assessment in Nigeria*, Kaduna: Atman Limited
- Badamus, M.O. Madina (1999) 'Restoring Integrity and Quality of Assessment of Home Economics at the Senior Secondary School Level' *Journal of Quality Education*,6, 16-13. C).
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2004). National Policy on Education (4th Edition).
- Kelleghan, Thomas (2002). *Using Assessment Learning Achievement*, New York: UNICEF www.unicef.org Retrieved July, 2007.
- Marzano, R., Pickering, D., and Pallock, J., (2001). *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Students Achievement*, Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development VA. <http://www.ascd.org>
- Momoh, G.D. (1997), *Strategies for Achieving Quality in Educational Assessment: The Case of Technical Education*. 15th Annual Conference Proceeding of the Association of Education Assessment in Africa (AEAA).
- Osborne, Jonathan & Simon, S. (1996) 'Primary Science Past and Future Directions, *Studies' Science Education*. 27, 999-147.