TEACHER SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT PRACTICES TO ENHANCE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION IN IJEBU-DIVISION OF OGUN STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated teacher factor in assessment towards enhancing universal Basic Education in Ijebu of Ogun State. The study attempted to find out how teachers assess their students and areas in which teachers need assistance. Three research questions were raised and answered in the study using descriptive research design. Participants were 120 teachers selected across the six local government areas in Ijebuland. A checklist developed and validated by the researcher was used to carry out the research; the checklist was titled Teacher Assessment Practices Information Checklist (TAPIC). Data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed that teachers indicated the need for assistance on some assessment procedures such as: directing students to assess their own progress, skill of test construction and item development procedure. There exists a significant difference in the assessment practices of teachers with NCE and Degree, and those with differential professional status, experience and qualification. Recommendations include staff re-orientation to correct systematic defects on assessment practices.

Keywords: Teacher, School-based assessment, Universal Basic Education (UBE), Ijebu.

INTRODUCTION

There is the need to assess students' achievement in schools from time to time because assessment makes it possible to evaluate and review quality of instruction, methodology of teaching, students' progress, and quality of the curriculum and provision of feedback to stakeholders. Okpala, Onocha and Oyedeji (1993) state that assessment is an important component of teaching and learning. It is a continuous process which is basic to teaching and learning. However, appropriate use of assessment depends on a thorough understanding of the concept, its nature and role (Anastasi, & Urbina, 2009). Thus, it can be deduced that assessment is useful in every step of teaching; all technicalities of teaching will make use of it right from introductory, presentation, socio cognitive structure and evaluation. The reason is that assessment provides teachers with ample opportunities to examine the quality and effectiveness of their teaching and adjust methods when necessary.

Teachers would use assessment to determine clarity of learning from first step before proceeding to the next steps and at the end of lesson. Every good teacher, therefore, must be knowledgeable in the art of measuring student's learning (Cohan & Elmore, 1995). In order to do this, the teacher must use reliable methods to measure their status and to express it in quantitative terms. Quantitative evaluation is necessary because it is objective, scientific and provides comprehensive information about students' learning. The organization of assessment is at the level of completing report sheets for individual students that is, organizing the ability of the students performance in a concise forms based on the score submitted for various subjects (Oyedji & Ogunbanjo, 2001). According to Farrant (1980) assessment is the process by which the quality of individual's performance is judged. In schools, assessment of learning is usually carried out by teachers on the bases of impressions

gained as they observe their pupils at work. When practice as an on-going process, such assessment is known as continuous assessment.

Classroom assessment and evaluation have become important aspects of teaching to better structure learning activities. They are effective means of knowing more about the level of understanding of learners (Heffner, 2004). Information from classroom assessment and evaluation helps students to attain optimal learning as well as the teacher to assess teaching quality and effectiveness and adapt teaching to students' needs. In effect, assessment provides feedback which enables teachers refine and clarify objectives, select a new teaching method, reorganize activities and review the evaluation instrument and process. The importance of assessment to teachers during instructional process is summarized in the words of Okpala et al (1993) who write that without assessment, there cannot be feedback, without feedback, there cannot be good knowledge of results and without knowledge of results, there cannot be systematic improvement in learning.

The purposes of assessment are attainable if it built the instructional process at the planning stage (Okpala et al, 1993). In addition, great care must be taken to ensure that assessment instruments are valid, reliable and usable. Assessment is valid when it measures exactly what claims to measure, reliable when it consistently measures the same thing repeatedly and useable when it is affordable in terms of cost and the user has the required expertise to effectively use it (Okpala et al, 1993). Assessment should not always be paper and pencil work because this approach may fail to adequately measure the affective and psychomotor domains of learning (Nenty, Adedoyin, Odili, and Major, 2007). Many paper and pencil assessments measure cognitive abilities to the exclusion of the affective and psychomotor learning domains (Heffner, 2004). Assessment in the cognitive domain is associated with the process of knowledge and understanding. The affective domain applies to characteristics such as attitudes, motives, interests, and other personality traits. Assessment in the psychomotor domain involves assessing the learners' ability to use his or her hands (e.g. in handwriting, construction and projects) (Alausa, 2009).

Apart from tests and examination, assessment should include observation methods, rating method, socio-metric method, anecdotal record, interview and even the use of questionnaire because these methods especially when used together complement each other and provide ample opportunity to assess the three domains of learning, which are cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains (Mueller, & Schifrin, 2006). It is doubtful whether teachers are using all these varieties of instruments to measure the overall performance of students because many teachers lacked the required training and skills and in many cases the teacher – pupil ratio exceed normal standard of 1 teacher to 25 pupils, instead the ratio is often 1 teacher to 80 or more pupils (Nenty, Adedoyin, Odili, and Major, 2007).

Anastasi, and Urbina, (2009) identified some factors responsible for the non usage of instruments like paucity of standardized instruments, especially tools for the affective domain, teachers' ignorance of some of the available techniques, too much emphasis on the cognitive aspect of learning as well as the problem of how to interpret measurement data obtained through the use of other measuring instruments apart from achievement/cognitive test. Many of these teachers lack the required training and skills in modern assessment techniques (Heffner, 2004) and the overcrowded nature of classrooms (Okpala et al, 1993) does not favour thorough and proper classroom assessments (Nenty, Adedoyin, Odili, and Major, 2007). Oyedeji and Ogunbanjo (2001) identified areas of high and low priority needs of the teachers with respect to assessment practices. Some of the areas of needs are: preparation of materials for testing pupils, interpretation of the result of the standardized test,

direction of pupil to assess their own progress, assessment of students' progress by teacher assessment of individual pupils, reporting pupils to parent, reporting pupils progress to the school administrators and so on. Teacher showed lackadaisical attitude on those factors responsible for their inefficiency in discharging their duties. This may be as a result of low morale resulting from poor and irregular pay (Nenty, Adedoyin, Odili, and Major, 2007) and lack of refresher training opportunities to equip them with modern assessment techniques (Okpala et al, 1993). That is why they cause major set-backs in school based-assessment practices and this may impair the success of the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria most especially in Ogun State.

Research questions

1. What are the areas of teachers' needs with respect to assessment practices?
2. Is there any significant difference between professional teachers and non professional teachers with regards to their assessment practices?
3. Is there any significant difference between the assessment practices of NCE teachers and Graduate teachers?

Research design

The study adopted descriptive survey method. This design is concerned with the objective description of phenomenon, determination of process that is on-going and emerging trends. The design was considered suitable for this study because it makes it possible to select a representative sample from which the data were collected.

Target population and sample

The target population for the study is all Junior Secondary School (Upper Basic Education) teachers in Ijebu division of Ogun State. Random sampling technique was used to select 12 Junior Secondary Schools from six local governments in the division. Two schools were choosing from each local government. A total of 120 teachers of core subjects (Mathematics, English Language, Social Studies, and Integrated Science) purposively selected were used.

Instrumentation

Checklist was designed to collect data which was titled 'Teacher Assessment Practices Information Checklist (TAPIC)'. This instrument is a self-rating scale and it consists of four sections A, B, C and D. Section A is designed to collect demographic data of the respondent. Section B contains 14 items seeking information on the assessment practices used by Junior Secondary School teachers. Section C seeks for reasons why teachers are not using some of the instruments while Section D requests for the areas where teachers need assistance with respect to assessment practices.

Procedure

The checklist was administered to the respondents at the selected Junior Secondary Schools in Ijebu. Before administering the instrument, necessary precautions were taken by the researchers to erase any form of anxiety and subjectivity on the part of the respondents. The researchers assured the respondents of utmost confidentiality. The administration of the instruments lasted 45 minutes in each centre.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed using frequency counts, means score, simple percentage, standard deviation and student t-test. The frequency counts and simple percentage were used to provide answers to research question one, while student t-test was used to answer the other two research questions.

Table 1: Areas of Teachers' Needs to Improve Assessment Practices

	Areas of Need	No help needed %	Little help needed%	Moderate help needed %	Much help Needed %
1	Preparing materials for testing students	19.00 (22.8)	48.00 (57.6)	18.00 (21.6)	15.00 (18)
2	Interpreting results of standardized tests	23.00 (27.6)	37.00 (44.4)	20.00 (24)	20.00 (24)
3	Directing students to assess their own progress	11.00 (13.2)	32.00 (38.4)	40.00 (48)	17.00 (20.4)
4	Reporting student to parents	40.00 (48)	40.00 (48)	10.00 (12)	10.00 (12)
5	Reporting student progress to administration	38.00 (45.6)	35.00 (42)	25.00 (30)	2.00 2.4
6	Reporting student to other teachers in school	55.00 (66)	35.00 (44.4)	5.00 (6)	3.00 (3.6)
7	Utilizing cumulative test results in the final various types of instruments	23.00 (27.6)	45.00 (54)	25.00 (34.8)	3.00 (3.6)
8	Assessing student's progress by using various types of instruments. (Essay, multiple choice etc.)	10.00 (12)	28.00 (33.6)	40.00 (48)	22.00 (26.4)
9	Categorization of instruments into cognitive, affective and psychomotor	10.00 (12)	19.00 (22.8)	24.00 (28.8)	47.00 (56.4)
10	Assessment of the affective and psychomotor performance of students.	9.00 (10.8)	14.00(16.8)	33.99 (39.6)	44.00 (52.8)
11	Skill of test construction	14.00 (16.8)	18.00 (21.6)	28.00 (33.6)	40.00 (48)
12	Item development procedure	12.00 (14.4)	20.00 (24)	23.00 (27.6)	45.00 (54)

- Data before the brackets represent the frequency score
- Data in brackets represent percentage (%) score

Results on table 1 shows that teachers need much help in the area of:

1. Categorization of instrument into cognitive, affective and psychomotor (47%)
2. Items development procedure (45%)
3. Assessment of the affective and psychomotor performance of students (44%)
4. Skills of test construction (40%)

This therefore implies that a significant number of teachers need much help on those areas.

The teachers need moderate helps in three areas of:

1. Directing students to assess their own progress (40%
2. Assessing students' progress by using various types of instruments (essay, multiple choice) (40%)

The teachers need little help in the area of:

1. Preparing material for testing students (48%)
2. Utilizing cumulative test results in the final result of students (45%)
3. Interpreting result of standardized test (37%)

The teachers may not need any help in the area of:

1. Reporting students progress to other teachers in the school (55%)
2. Reporting student's to parent (40%)
3. Reporting students progress to administrator (38%)

It is therefore concluded that significant numbers of teachers need no help on those areas.

Table 2 above shows significant t-calculated value = 12.81 at 0.05 level. Therefore, the postulated null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This suggests that professional and non-professional teachers differ significantly with regards to assessment practices. The mean scores show that professional teachers use varieties of assessment instruments more than non-professional teachers.

Table 2: Assessment Practices of Professional and Non Professional Teachers.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal.	p	df	Remark
Professional Teacher	72	16.4	2.8	12.81	.000	118	Significant
Non professional Teacher	48	12.6	3.4				

Table 3 (below) shows significant difference between NCE teachers and Graduate teachers with regards to the use of assessment instruments ($t = 15.2$; $p < .05$). Therefore, the postulated null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This means that NCE and Graduate teachers differ significantly in terms of assessment practices. The mean scores show that Graduate teachers are more skillful in the use of assessment instruments than the NCE teachers.

Table 3: Difference in the assessment practices of NCE and Graduate teachers

GROUP	N	X	SD	t-cal.	p	df	Remark
NCE Teacher	39	12.8	2.7	15.2	.001	118	significant
Graduate Teacher	81	13.4	2.5				

$P<0.05$

Discussion

Many of the teachers need moderate helps on directing students to assess their own progress, assessing student's progress by using various types of instruments (essay, multiple choice etc).Teachers need much help in the areas of; categorization of instruments into cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains; assessment of the affective and psychomotor performance of the students, skills in test construction and item development procedure. This corroborates Oyedeji (2004) who observes that to improve classroom assessment, there would always be the need to determine teachers' needs in classroom assessment. Some teachers failed to adjust and seek knowledge on those areas.

The finding on the second hypothesis revealed that professional teachers and non professional teachers differ significantly with regards to their assessment practices. Professional teachers were found to have lesser needs in terms of classroom assessment compared with the non-professional teachers. This is plausible considering the fact that professional teachers might have been exposed to various assessment practices during training while the non-professional teachers whose training has nothing to do with teaching may not have such opportunity during their undergraduate days. This finding is in support of Cohan, and Elmore (1995) who report that the relationship between structural change in schools and changes in teaching and learning are relating to elements such as; knowledge and skills of teachers, professional values, commitments and empowerment.

The finding on the third hypothesis also revealed that Graduate and NCE teachers differ significantly with respect to assessment practices in schools. Graduate teachers were found to have lesser needs in terms of classroom assessment compared with the N.C.E. teachers. The implication of this is that there is the need to review the training curriculum of N.C.E. teachers to incorporate more training in assessment practices. This result supports the view of Mueller & Shiffrin, (2006) submission that teachers' training curriculum need periodic review to enable teachers gain skills in modern assessment practices. They identified "subject matter knowledge"; "pedagogical content knowledge" and "skills in assessment practices" as key variables influencing teachers' decision and behavior in the classroom. Prior subject matter and background in a content area affect the ways in which teachers select assessment instruments and structure subject-content for teaching, as well as the way they choose activities and assignments for students, and use text books and other curriculum materials.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, teachers need special training in the use of modern assessment practices. Hence, teachers should be given periodic training in assessment practices in order to boost teaching and learning activities in schools. There is need for teachers to update their knowledge on the usefulness of interviews, anecdotal records, rating scales, questionnaires, socio-metric tests and projects in assessing students. Government should organize seminars and workshops for training of teachers on item development procedures, skills in test construction and assessment of the affective and psychomotor performances of students. Non-professional teachers should be encouraged to acquire teaching qualifications at least a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education; (PGDE) while Teachers holding the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) also need to acquire higher educational qualifications such as a Bachelor Degree in Education. Special budgetary provisions should be made for such training in order to encourage affected teachers to acquire necessary qualifications. It is hoped that effective

implementation of these recommendations would help to improve assessment practices in schools.

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