

School-Based Assessment: Benefit and Teachers' Perception in Nigerian Secondary Schools

S. G. Mkpae (Ph.D)

Department of Educational Psychology
Guidance and Counselling
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Port Harcourt.

Obowu-Adutchay V. (Ph.D)

Department of Educational Psychology
Guidance and Counselling
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Port Harcourt.

Abstract

This study investigated the perception of teachers on the school-based assessment procedure and to determine their readiness to conduct it in schools. The benefit of SBA compares with testing and end of year exams were discussed. The study adopted the descriptive survey research ex post facto design. The population comprised all the graduate teachers of the randomly selected federal, state and private schools within the state. A total number of 30 secondary schools were randomly selected and used. From each of the schools 15 teachers were selected using the stratified random sampling technique based on sex, tribe and years of teaching. The sample size was 450 teachers, 250 males and 200 females. The questionnaire was Teachers' Perception of School-Based Assessment Questionnaire (TPSBAQ) developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed in the four point likert scale format, Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree to illicit responses on teachers' perception. The questionnaire was divided into three sections A, B and C. The instrument was validated by the researcher's colleagues who are expert psychometricians. Cronbach alpha was used for the reliability coefficient with an index of 0.82. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyse data from the research question. While chi-square statistical analysis was used for the hypothesis. The results show that half of the teachers were not ready to conduct SBA. School factors influenced the conduct of SBA with chi-square analysis of 30.12 above table value of 5.99 at 0.05 significant levels. Recommendations for the implementation of SBA in schools were also made.

Key words: Psychometricians, perceptions, school-based assessment, implementation

Introduction

Education is the pivot on which all facets of human, social and economic developments of a nation can revolve. It is a vital mechanism for achieving universal national development. Any viable or sustainable economy in a large country such as Nigeria must depend on worthwhile educational standard based on relevant curriculum planning and teaching methodology to develop reliable human resources and authenticate stable development. To accomplish these needs to improve human capital development to meet the world's rapid change educationally and economically, a new assessment process should be recognized in our educational system.

The process of achieving this realization has witnessed numerous reforms and changes in curriculum design and teaching method since the pre-independence era in the country. The purpose of these changes in the educational programme and attaining a recognized standard however, remains in the classroom. Two pillars of educational development are noticed in the classroom with the teachers and the learners. The main thrust of education is on the children. But the teachers and the children must participate actively for a healthy classroom and a successful educational system. The classroom activities should impact on the children or students so as to effect changes in behaviour through relevant exposures to specific experiences and systematic presentations of skills, attitudes, concepts and principles.

However, the social and economic challenges which had bedeviled the educational systems in Nigeria have called for a change in the nature of assessment commencing from the primary, secondary to the tertiary levels of our education. This should reflect the process of evaluating the learners at the three levels by the teachers. This is to determine performance and decision making. It has, right from the onset of the formal education in Nigeria, known that the process of determining the performance of a student by the classroom teacher had been by summative assessment or end of year examination.

Greater values had been placed on testing since the inception of formal education based on the fact that tests are the basic critical reporting mechanism for the yearly progress of the children. The testing of students through a single examination administered at the end of the school year had been a regular practice throughout our educational system. Even when teachers administered tests and examinations to students, scores obtained from such exercise were only used for purposes of yearly promotion from one class to the other. This process had never been part of the criteria for final decision and certification. For comparison of performance in this process, especially on students of similar classes in other schools, tested and scored differently, could not be adequately considered, because no provision was made to that effect for checking standard (www.iaea.info/paper-1162d22034). The testing method, though had remained with teachers, is very unproductive to determine achievement. Testing has provoked a spate of articles and books passionately safeguarding and resisting assessment and its effects on teaching and learning (www.centerforpubliceducation.org/ma...)

Researchers have argued the tricks and errors in various education sectors about testing by teachers. That testing motivates teachers and students to work towards performance goal and not learning goal. Linn (2000) as cited in Adediwura (2012) asserted that increase in scores most likely indicates teachers' and students' familiarity with tests requirements and formats rather than the real improvement in learning. In another development, high-stake test can induce test anxiety, lack of motivation, low self-esteem and self-efficacy especially for low achieving students (Assessment Reform Group, 2002, Harlen, 2002). Teachers who intend to make up scores usually teach to test. In this case, they focus on what is to be tested and developing test taking strategies towards it, (Andrew, Fullilove and Wong, (2002).

Sometimes the achievement of greater objectivity may become difficult because of the involvement of the skill that cannot be easily tested in normal examination condition especially problem-solving and criteria thinking skills. Similarly, the administration of one final examination at the end of term or the end of the programme to ascertain students' performance has a defective effect and weakness for standard referencing. This is because it cannot give a reliable description of the individual student's ability. Again, other unforeseeing circumstances like sudden ill-health, accident, inability of the home to provide assistance including other psychological variables, could invariably influence this one-short examination (Bassey and Idaka, 2007). Consequently however, many researchers including

Lawal (1997) have examined the negative effects of testing on teachers and students, and found that testing and one final examination at the end of a term or end of year can influence laziness in students who focus on only the final examination result because of lack of interest in the students as nothing motivates or requires seriousness since it is the normal end of course examination. Furthermore, emphasis is usually noticed on reproduction of facts as students memorise the facts instead of the learning concepts to real life situations. Productive skill is lacking for valuing certificates. These conditions call for examination malpractice.

Other negative classroom effects from testing as highlighted by other researchers in this field, states that testing narrows the curriculum as subject matters which cannot be tested are eliminated. There is dependence on memorization of facts that can easily be recalled for multiple choice testing thereby, reducing learning and students devoting much time factor in the classroom to test preparation instead of focusing on learning. Sometimes memorization may be favourable or unfavourable due to the fact that the suspected questions, for which the answers might have been memorized, may or may not likely be tested. It should be remembered that when students are obsessed, little or no time would they have in doing any relevant thing of their interest. That means pressing students with too many examinations leads them to have limited time to be able to achieve maximum level of creativity, innovation, developing personal talent, ability and potentials in their areas of interest. Teachers too have little or no feedback on how to improve effectiveness in students during their teaching profession.

Although Nigerian education has yielded good result in the past, probably based on the attention given to education, but the performance of recent times has been on the decline. Huge cries of the public about the woeful and deteriorating performance especially in public examinations in the country have called for a change in the system. Because of the need for quality education in the country and in a bid to find a lasting solution to the poor standard that has affected our educational industry, this paper intends to examine the perception of teachers about the new system of assessing the performance of students. The negative consequences of testing practices have called for the purpose and value of assessment in the teaching and learning processes.

From research conducted, it is noticed that testing only serves the purpose of summarizing students' achievement by giving grade and reporting marks to students at the end of teaching and learning (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). Again, most tests are standardized and may not have any strong relationship with the class instruction. So, due to some problems in testing such as test anxiety and prior knowledge before testing, attention is needed to be shifted from testing and focus on assessment, which is an effective tool to promote learning as an integral part of teaching and learning (Assessment Reform Group, 2002).

Time has come to focus on assessment for learning which is activity-base in the classroom instead of assessment of learning. Assessment for learning enables teachers to plan the next step of teaching and learning, (Adediwura, 2012). Change is recommended by the Nigeria National Policy on Education (2004), in assessment practices in schools. This should emphasize assessment for learning as it is assessment activities that are embedded in normal teaching and learning processes. The purpose of this is to provide feedback for both teachers and students. This type of assessment for learning is an integral part of the teaching, learning and assessment cycle. This is the school-based assessment (SBA) required to form the component of teaching and learning in the school for maximum productivity in the educational industry, (Black et al, 2003).

Concept of School-Based Assessment and Benefit

School-based assessment is an assessment which is embedded in the teaching and learning process in the school (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/sba_hkdse). According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, school-based assessment is an assessment that considers teachers' grade as part of students' official grade after completing specific school level. School-based assessment is an assessment procedures for a more responsive and valid assessment of learning. It is part of the teaching process, requiring increase in personal contact with and observation of learners. It is a way of obtaining information about learning progress (Obioma, Junaidu & Ajagun, 2013). School-based assessment is a monitoring device which feed back the information collected to teacher to adjust their teaching and to improve students' learning skill. School-based assessment process contains important features with wide range of assessment tasks and skills assessed, flexible with open ended questions (Almed & William, 1994). These descriptions indicate that school-based assessment is quite different based on its purposes in educational setting.

However, school-based assessment as a new concept is not really understood by teachers, students stakeholders and parents. The shift from the only single public end of year examination is confusing and put many people in doubt of the new assessment. This is because the issue of summative exam, accountability and evaluation purposes may cut off the demand of the stakeholders and users of assessment information on promotion results and monitoring school performance. School-based assessment is an effective classroom assessment which requires skills and practices as students interact to achieve their immediate objectives. It is the basic need of the teacher to improve the standard of learning, because they have greater responsibility to design quality assessment that aligns with the students learning outcome. Teachers have the opportunities to continuously monitor their students and give constructive feedback to improve students' learning abilities. Based on the assessment outcomes, the teacher can make further decision whether to continue on the topic or on a new topic give necessary help or send more academically challenged students to remedial class (Brown, 2001). Through school-based assessment all students must be appraised base on the natural understanding and ability and readiness. According to Davidson (2007), teachers are encouraged in this assessment to use various methods such as quizzes, question and answer sessions, short writing, drama and role-play to assess students' learning outcome.

There are good numbers of characteristics which distinguish this new form of assessment from other ones. For instance, school-based assessment involves teachers to plan assessment programme, identify appropriate assessment test for students and involve in making assessment judgement. School-based assessment allows for the collection of sample of students' performance over a period of time. It can also be adopted and modified to match the teaching and learning goals of a particular class and the students assessed. School-based assessment takes place in the classroom where students and teachers interact and students can receive constructive feedback immediately after the assessment has been done in order to improve learning.

Furthermore, other important characteristics include conducting the assessment by the students' own teacher who has been familiar with them. This will make the assessment reliable. The involvement of the students in the more actively assessment process including the peer assessment in association of the teacher implies cooperation and the sharing of expertise take place. School-based assessment is a significant innovation in school teaching and learning because it stimulates continuous evaluation and adjustment of the teaching and learning programme. It complements other forms of assessment including external examination (<http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/sba/hkdse>).

Teachers are the foundation layers of students' development. As they develop students, they are also developing themselves professionally as they build their skills which can be extended to other areas of the educational curriculum. School-based assessment in many educational systems throughout the world is extensively used to provide information about student achievement. The need to shift from a testing and examination culture to an assessment culture has been kindled in many developed nations of the world. This realization emanates from the benefits of school-based assessment on the educational development of many nations. This statement supports research studies which have gathered evidence showing benefits of assessment for learning or formative assessment to students' learning. According to Black et al (2003) as cited in Adediwura, the shift in teacher's role to that of a facilitator in formative assessment makes students change from passive recipient of information and knowledge to active participants in the classroom. This is a greater benefit. Through the new form of assessment, students now take more responsibility for their learning and become more independent learners. Students can now find out solution to their problems and therefore develop more knowledge and skills that can sustain their development. Any class project or assignment in the area of their assessment during study is fully embraced with joy now, unlike the expression of reluctance fear and anxiety in their course work, like in the past.

Now students own up their works and are free to take more responsibility for their learning and become more independent learner and enjoy the freedom they have in the assessment process (Adediwura, 2012). When students become independent learners, skills are developed in extreme recognition with reliable confidence in learning outcomes. With the application of formative assessment which is an assessment that is specifically intended to provide feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning. Students gain a lot because their works end in better production. Since this assessment is carried out during instructional process for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, the benefit enable students to see the linkage between classroom learning and their real-life situations and drawing connection between new concept gained through assessment and the previously acquired knowledge.

According to Black and William (1998), school-based assessment or formative assessment can significantly influence students' motivation self-esteem and confidence. The effects of assessment for learning have also been found to influence achievement gain in externally mandated examination. In another research conducted by Cowie (2005), students trust and respects were significant in assessment for learning. This also follows the students to identify respect as significant to their active involvement in assessment interactions with teachers and peers.

Another useful benefit is that school-based assessment transforms the classroom teaching and learning processes which also benefit the student. Note that significant changes in teachers' perception of teaching and the role they play have been identified. That is the result of formative assessment. With school-based assessment teachers start to see teaching as facilitating students' learning rather than mere completing the curriculum (Black et al, 2003). In another development, the perception of teachers on students as having a fixed level of ability also change and they begin to observe that their students are able to improve with appropriate assistance and support. Hall et al (1997) assert that the need to assess the students by the teacher has pushed them to plan their teaching in greater dimension throughout the school session. That this process has made them aware of the importance of keeping close eyes on students' work which gave them better judgement on students' ability and more focus on teaching.

However, the evidence above reveals that the impact of the change in the assessment system has further led to a paradigm change in the teaching and learning processes of all

primary and secondary schools education programme. Despite this evidence, the change process is not an easy task, especially based on the complex teaching context including the multiple dimensions of teacher factors. But any possible way to explore the implementation of assessment for learning or school-based assessment need must be examined. This study therefore, intends to investigate teachers' perception on the need for the school-based assessment in Nigerian secondary school since their role in this new assessment remains vital. The nature of the study will cover only the teachers' readiness to influence the implementation because of the conviction on the derived benefit which when compared with the testing mode of the system is very significant.

Research Questions

1. How are the Nigerian secondary school teachers ready to conduct school-based assessment in the schools?

Research Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' school and their readiness to conduct school-based assessment.

Methodology

Design: This study adopted the descriptive survey research of ex post facto design.

Population: The population comprised all classroom teachers of the selected federal, state and private schools in Rivers State.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The sample used was chosen through purposive random sampling procedure made up of 450 graduate teachers – 250 male and 200 female from 30 secondary schools, 2 federal government secondary schools, 18 state secondary schools and 10 well populated private secondary schools irrespective of their locations within the state. 15 teachers were randomly selected from the 30 schools. The researcher was interested in mature teachers who had been in the teaching profession for over 15 years. The purpose of this duration was to ensure that they are familiar with the testing and examination procedures and sources of grades for promotion.

Research instrument: The instrument used was the Teachers' Perception of School-Based Assessment Questionnaire (TPSAQ) developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed in the four points likert scale format (strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree) to illicit responses on teachers perception. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, A, B, and C. Section A contains items on demographic information such as name of school, sex and years of teaching experience. Section B contained the items that centred on the extent to which the teachers see themselves ready to conduct school-based assessment based on their understanding of the requirements. Section C contains items used to determine teachers' relationship with their schools to conduct SBA. The questionnaire was validated by the researcher's colleagues who are expert psychometricians. Cronbach alpha was used for the reliability coefficient with an index of 0.82. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyse data from the research question. While chi-square statistical analysis was used for the hypothesis.

Result

Table 1: Mean Score Analysis on Teacher's Readiness to conduct school-based assessment in Nigeria secondary schools.

Teachers Readiness	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total Resp.	Total Score	\bar{x}	SD	Ref. mean	Remark
School-based assessment (SBA) should be implemented in Nigerian secondary schools.	80	100	90	180	450	980	2.17	1.14	2.5	NS
Teachers should be involved in SBA for better teaching and learning.	70	150	130	100	450	1090	2.4	1.00	2.5	NS
SBA requirements are easy to understand.	85	105	120	140	450	1035	2.3	1.10	2.5	NS
SBA does not promote students skills only	80	60	180	130	450	890	2.2	1.05	2.5	NS
SBA is the same as continuous assessment.	180	60	140	70	450	1250	2.8	1.13	2.5	*
SBA involves a lot of time in conducting it.	160	120	80	90	450	1250	2.7	1.13	2.5	*
Marking criteria is easy to understand.	100	110	50	190	450	1020	2.3	1.21	2.5	NS
The marking criteria is difficult	140	130	110	70	450	1240	2.7	1.05	2.5	*
Giving feedback during teaching is difficult.	150	110	90	100	450	1210	2.6	1.15	2.5	*
SBA promote feedback for correction.	135	125	100	80	450	1195	2.7	1.10	2.5	*
Using SBA tool for class interaction promotes learning.	120	110	80	140	450	1110	2.5	1.18	2.5	*
One end of year exam makes students work harder.	90	115	120	125	450	1070	2.4	1.07	2.5	NS

From the mean statistical analysis on table 1, out of the 12 items on the questionnaire, six items indicated disagreement or against by about half of the teachers as their mean analysis meet the criteria mean of 2.5. Two items on SBA, i.e. promoter of feedback for correction and use of SBA tools for class interaction respectively, supported the conduct of school-based assessment in schools.

Table 2: Relationship between teachers' school and their readiness to conduct SBA.

Chi-square analysis showing the relationship between teachers' school and their readiness to conduct SBA.

A 2 X 3 contingency table was used showing Agreed and Disagreed and the name of schools for the chi-square analysis.

School	Teachers Readiness to conduct SBA			X ²	df	Table value
	Agreed	Disagreed	Total			
Federal Government schools	120 (91.59)	64 (92.40)	184			
State schools	61 (81.13)	102 (81.86)	163			
Private schools	43	60				

	(51.27)	(51.72)	103	30.12	2	5.99
Total	224	226	450			

The result in table 2 shows the analysis of chi-square 2 x 3 contingency table as chi-square calculated = 30.12. At 0.05 level of significance and df 2 X^2 critical value is 5.99. That is, the null hypothesis is rejected as the calculated X^2 value is 30.12 great than the critical value 5.99. This implies that the readiness of the teachers to conduct school-based assessment is dependent on the school. That is teachers from different schools hold different perception towards the conduct of school-based assessment.

Discussion

The introduction of school-based assessment has been belated inspite of the huge challenges that have engulfed our development educationally. The need to take a u-turn and assess the falling standard of our education has been pressing. From this study, teachers who should account for the educational standard of the country do not feel the need to embrace SBA in our schools. From the finding, some teachers from the sample school, believed that assessment in schools help the students a lot. That if this assessment process is embraced and continues, students will develop more skills and understand the study well. Although the readiness to conduct the SBA in the school has not been serious in the teachers' mind, many teachers in this study have good feeling and can embrace the system if fully implemented. It is noticed that more than half of the teachers understood the requirement and procedures and condemn the testing and end of year examination for student achievement.

Again most of the teachers supported the view that the SBA system discourages exam-oriented culture and encouraged a more related exam-free environment. Most teachers believed that the SBA promotes creative teaching and learning.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is observed that teachers show much interest in the assessment process and better understanding of the characteristics of school-based assessment in secondary schools. This study has shown the importance of SBA based on the immense benefits to the students as well as the teachers in term of teaching and learning. Students usually like to play, therefore the SBA tools such as drama, group project work, role play, questioning and answering session with immediate feedback procedure and classroom interactions could impress on their interest to practice for maximum skills development among them.

However, the challenges of poor standard of our education need to be examined. Consideration should be focused on the application of SBA to facilitate the teaching and learning processes in the schools. Therefore the researcher recommend that it is noteworthy that teachers should shift from the ordinary testing in the testing and termly examination to the one that suit the requirement of the school-based assessment system which is performance assessment. School supervisors should monitor the implementation of SBA in all schools in the country.

References

- Adediwura, A.A. (2012). Teachers' Perception of School-Based Assessment in Nigerian secondary schools. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science*. Vol. 3(1).
- Ahmed, A., & Williams, H. (1994). School-based assessment: Improving students in the process. Paper presented at the 1993 IAEA Conference, Reduit, Mauritius.

- Andrews, S.J., Fullilove, J. & Wong, Y. (2002). Targeting washback: A case study. *System*, 30, 207-233.
- Assessment Reform Group (2002). Testing motivation and learning. In A.A. Adediwura (Ed), Teachers perception of school-based assessment in Nigerian secondary schools. *Journal of Social Science*. Vol.3(1).
- Bassey, S.W. and Idaka, I.E. (2007). Reforming Assessment practice in schools. The option of Integrated Domain Benchmark. Paper presented at the 2007 Association University of Jos 31st – 3rd August.
- Black, P., & William, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 5(1), 7-74.
- Black, P., Harrison, C., Marshall, B., & William, D. (2003). *Assessment for learning: Putting it into practice*. England: Open University Press.
- Brown, G.T.L. (2001). School-based assessment methods: Development and implementation. *Journal of Assessment Paradigms*, 1(1), 30-32.
- Cowie, B. (2005). Student commentary on classroom assessment in Science: A sociocultural interpretation. *International Journal of Science Education*, 27(2), 199-214.
- Davison, C. (2007). Views from the chalkface: School-based assessment in Hong Kong. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 4(1), 37-68.
- Hall, K., Webber, B., Varley, S., Young, V. & Dorman, P. (1997). A study of teacher assessment at Key Stage 1. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 27, 107-122.
- Harlen, W. (2005). Teachers' Summative practices and for learning. tension and synergies. *The Curriculum Journal*. 16(2), 207-223.
- Lawal, J. (1997). A study of the level of correlation between continuous assessment scores and examination scores. *The Nigeria Teachers Today*. Vol. 5(1&2), 117.
- Linn, R. (2000). Assessment and accountability. Educational Research. In A.A. Adediwura (Ed), Teachers perception of school-based assessment in Nigerian secondary schools. *Journal of Social Science*. Vol.3(1).
- Obioma, G., Junaidu, J. & Ajagun, G. (2003). The automation of educational assessment in Nigeria: Challenges and implications for pre-service teacher education. Paper presented at the 39th Annual Conference of the International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) held at the Dan Panorama Hotel, Tel-Aviv, Israel October 20th – 25th, 2013.
- Shohamy, E. (1992). Beyond proficiency testing: A diagnostic feedback testing model for assessment foreign language. *The Modern Language Journal*, 76(4), 513-521.
- www.iarea.inf/./paper-162dz 2034
- www.centerforpubliceducation.org/ma...