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# **1.0 Introduction**

Assessment is an integral part of instruction. To a larger extent, the successful of teachers in their job depends on their understanding of assessment and ability to apply and use assessments correctly within lessons. For this reason, assessment forms part of teacher certificate courses and examinations because the body of education wants to ensure that teachers understand how to use assessments to make decisions in class (Jasper, 2021). This article highlights some of the key issues on the topic of assessment with the purpose of assisting to enhance teachers’ job success.

In the education assessment refers to the process of gathering information about students’ strengths and weaknesses in order to make decisions about their instruction to measure the attainment of educational objectives. Assessment has many definitions, but it can generally be summed up as the measurement of learning (UNIV-ENGLISH, 2022). Assessment is associated with other concepts like testing, evaluation and learning.

Testing refers to the process of measuring the level of skill or knowledge that has been reached by a student (Paeng, 2021). Testing aims at assessing students’ learning outcomes, tracking their progress, and providing feedback on their academic performance. Evaluation involves the systematic determination of the worth, value, or quality of a particular aspect of student performance or learning. It is the process of gathering information about the various qualitative aspects of the performance (TeachersWisdom, 2021). It focuses on assessing and documenting what students have learned and how well they have learned it and it also judging the quality of teaching and learning experiences (UNIV-ENGLISH, 2022). Learning, on the other hand, encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and understanding through various educational activities and experiences.

Discussions of this topic will help in transforming teaching and learning in schools by enabling serving teachers to acquire or refresh their knowledge on assessment.

# **2.0 Overview**

This article describes the concept of assessment focusing on the major types, importance and application. Then a case example has been given to illustrate the transformative power of assessment to education in any country. Towards the end, contribution of assessment to global educational goals and challenges of assessment have been outlined.

# **2.1 Types of assessment**

Basing on the purpose of assessment, the four major types of assessment are diagnostic, formative, summative and self assessment.

## a. Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment is done before instruction (EDUC-CENTRAL, 2021) such that sometimes it is considered to be the initial assessment. This type of assessment aims at determining both the weakness of students in the form of lack of preliquisite knowledge to the lesson or topic at hand and their strength in terms of what students already know. It also aims at preparing students for the instruction (EDUC-CENTRAL, 2021). According to (Jasper, 2021), diagnostic assessment pinpoints an issue with a particular skill.

## b. Formative assessment

Formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning, continuous assessment, informal assessment or learner oriented assessment (Sir"Chan"Chan, 2021; Etacude, 2024). This is the practice of using regular assessment practices to gather evidence that will inform teaching and learning decisions (TeachingEnglishWithOxford, 2021). This assessment emphasizes identifying learning gaps (Harjika, 2023; Sir"Chan"Chan, 2021), misconceptions and areas for improvement in real time. Formative assessment is an ongoing process that occurs during instruction and is designed to provide feedback to both students and teachers to inform and adjust teaching and learning activities (Etacude, 2024). In this type of assessment, the teacher provides timely feedback (Harjika, 2023) that supports students learning progress by identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses allowing for adjustment to instruction so that they should be able to provide targeted support to meet diverse need of students (Etacude, 2024). It promotes active student engagement in the learning process and they have opportunities to reflect on their understanding (Harjika, 2023; Etacude, 2024).

Assessment for learning is beneficial in that it promotes higher attainment, deeper student understanding and learner autonomy (TeachingEnglishWithOxford, 2021). In addition, formative assessment helps the teacher to get to know each student to guide them accordingly and plan future steps. It enables students to explore additional learning opportunities to ensure success and it also supports the teacher in the decision making process (CRIEDO-UAB, 2024).

The purpose of formative assessment is to track students’ progress throughout their learning process, so as to adapt teaching and tasks to their needs (CRIEDO-UAB, 2024). Additionally, it also include having an idea of whether students learned or are learning what the teacher is teaching, verifying whether the teacher may proceed to the next concept and checking whether the teaching strategy of the teacher is effective (EDUC-CENTRAL, 2021).

Examples of assessment practices in this type include questions, exit tickets, peer feedback and classroom discussions (Etacude, 2024). Examples walking around the room and observing students, noting down some things, quick checks, exit slips before students leave. Results may be recorded but are usually not graded (CRIEDO-UAB, 2024; EDUC-CENTRAL, 2021; Sir"Chan"Chan, 2021).

## c. Summative assessment

Summative assessment, also known as assessment of learning, occurs when teachers use evidence of student learning to make judgments on student achievement against goals and standards (CRIEDO-UAB, 2024). Typically, this occurs at the end of the topic, course or academic year (Harjika, 2023) , quantifying the learning experience (EDUC-CENTRAL, 2021).

The purpose of summative assessment is to check if students have acquired the expected knowledge by determining the changes which have been achieved at the end of the teaching and learning process. Teachers can use the results to improve next time (CRIEDO-UAB, 2024).

Examples of summative assessment activities are final exams, standardised test, end of term projects and graded assignments (Etacude, 2024). These are always graded (CRIEDO-UAB, 2024; Sir"Chan"Chan, 2021).

## d. Self assessment

Self-assessment is also known as assessment as learning. It occurs when students reflect on and monitor their progress to inform their future learning goals. Self directed learning students use their metacognitive processes to think about their own learning what strategies to support the learning and the mechanisms that they will use to advance the learning. This is the highest form of assessment and is used for students to monitor their own progress (Sir"Chan"Chan, 2021).

Other types of assessment include: 1. Placement assessment which is used for selecting people who would qualify a particular scenario (EDUC-CENTRAL, 2021). 2. Criterion referenced assessment measures skills against a set of standards or predetermined criteria. It emphasizes on description of performance (Harjika, 2023; Jasper, 2021). 3. Norm referenced assessment which compares performance of one test taker to another using a percentile ranking. It emphasizes on discrimination among individuals (Harjika, 2023).

By understanding the distinctions among these assessment approaches and leveraging their respective strengths teachers can effectively monitor students’ progress, tailor instructions and promote continuous development in students’ learning outcomes (Etacude, 2024).

# **2.2 Importance of assessment in education**

The importance of assessments includes but not limited to: 1.That it enables teachers to monitor student progress and identify learning gaps (Sir"Chan"Chan, 2021) so that they can tailor instruction to individual student needs. 2. That it allows for the measurement of learning outcomes and the alignment of teaching practices with curriculum goals. 3. That it provides feedback to students, parents, and educators to improve academic performance and support student growth (Harjika, 2023). 4. That it facilitates data-driven decision-making for school improvement, resource allocation, and policy development (TeachingEnglishWithOxford, 2021). 5. That it fosters a culture of continuous improvement, accountability, and transparency in education systems. 6. That it provides ongoing professional development for teachers on assessment literacy and best practices. 7. That it promotes collaborative assessment practices and peer learning among educators to share expertise and experience. 8. That it motivates students, after observing assessment results teachers can give necessary positive reinforcements to stimulate student’s urge to make further progress. 9. That it helps to give grades to students according to their performance. To guide improvement of students. After assessment teachers can guide the learners on how to overcome their weak areas (Harjika, 2023).

# **2.3 How teachers can apply the knowledge of assessment**

Firstly, the teachers can use this knowledge to design effective evaluation methods to measure student progress accurately. Accurate measurement of students’ progress enables making of good decisions pertaining to students’ progress. Secondly, the teachers are enabled to make effective interventions for successful learning of all students. This is so because using assessment data can help the teachers to identify areas where students may need additional support and provide targeted interventions. Furthermore, by carefully observing the assessment data collected from the class, teachers can reflect on their teaching practices and make necessary adjustments to improve student outcomes. Lastly, teachers can contribute effectively to the teaching profession by sharing best practices, collaborating with colleagues, and staying informed about new research and developments in assessment techniques.

From personal experience as a secondary school teacher, I can testify that knowledge of assessment is crucial in the professional life of teachers. This knowledge has earned me recognition among fellow teachers within and beyond the duty stations I have been to. With it I have facilitated in-service trainings organized for teachers in different school clusters, I have moderated mock examinations at cluster and district levels. Looking forward, I intend to open a You tube channel on which I shall be able share my knowledge with a bigger audience across my country and beyond.

# **2.4 Case example illustrating the transformative power of assessment on national education**

Authorities in a hypothetical country called Kwathu decided to embrace systematic assessment in its schools as an intervention aimed at improving students’ learning national wide.

In the first place, the government of Kwathu, through the ministry of education prioritised comprehensive teacher training programs emphasizing on assessment skills. Secondly, serving teachers and school administrators were provided with ongoing professional development trainings, mentorship, and resources focusing on assessment. This enhanced the assessment literacy of teachers and school administrators. In turn, varied assessment strategies were effectively implemented in classrooms in schools national wide.

Since one of the purposes of assessment in to inform instruction (Dr.KM, 2022), schools began to offer more personalized and targeted instruction based on assessment data. As such, student learning outcomes improved across the nation. Schools in Kwathu saw increased student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. The education system became became more responsive, inclusive, and effective in meeting diverse student needs.

In this case, Kwathu’s commitment to investing in teacher training and promoting effective assessment practices led to significant improvements in student learning outcomes, educational quality, and overall school performance.

# **2.5 Contributions of assessment towards global educational success**

By incorporating effective assessment practices into teaching, educators can not only enhance student outcomes but also contribute to broader educational goals and initiatives set forth by organizations like United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

To begin with, teachers’ effective use of assessment practices in various schools ensures high-quality education for all students. This aligns with UNESCO's goal of promoting inclusive and equitable education. Secondly, by fostering a culture of continuous assessment and learning in the classroom, teachers instill a passion for lifelong learning in students, supporting UNESCO's goal of promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Thirdly, through fair and unbiased assessment practices, teachers contribute towards achievement of UNESCO's goal of promoting gender equality in education. Lastly, by incorporating global citizenship and sustainability themes into assessment and learning activities, teachers contribute towards achieving UNESCO's goal of promoting sustainable development through education.

# **2.6 Challenges in effective implementation assessment in schools**

Basing on my fifteen year experience as a secondary school teacher, I can cite the following as challenges impinging on effective implementation of assessment by teachers in schools.

First of all, some schools barely afford to reserve funds for summative assessments. This forces teachers to limit formative assessment activities to those which do not use resources which demand for school funds. Another impediment to implementation of effective administration of assessments in schools is the pressure to focus of schools on standardized tests and examinations is another challenge to effective implementation of assessment. Teachers are expected by to target earlier completion of the syllabi in preparation for national examinations. Formative assessment activities are therefore regarded as time wasters. Besides that, effective assessment of students is also challenged by the large class sizes in schools. Teachers have time constraints that limit individualized assessment and feedback.

Other challenges are teachers’ lack of skills for ensuring fairness, validity and reliability in assessment for diverse student populations. Also, teachers’ inability to balance formative and summative assessments to support student learning while measuring achievement. These two challenges are persist due to prevalence of the challenge of limited continuous professional development training opportunities to effective assessment in most schools.

# **3.0 Conclusion**

Assessment is the process of gathering information about students’ strengths and weaknesses in order to make decisions about their instruction to measure the attainment of educational objectives. The major types of assessment are diagnostic, formative, summative and self assessment.

Assessment is important in ways like enabling teachers to monitor student progress and identify learning gaps so that they can tailor instruction to individual student needs, allowing for the measurement of learning outcomes and the alignment of teaching practices with curriculum goals, providing feedback to stake holders to improve academic performance and support student growth, facilitating data-driven decision-making for school improvement, resource allocation, and policy development among others.

Teachers’ can apply knowledge of assessment in designing effective evaluation methods to measure student progress accurately, making effective interventions for successful learning of all students, adjusting teaching practices to improve student outcomes.

By incorporating effective assessment practices into teaching, educators contribute to broader world wide educational goals like those set by and initiatives set United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) which includes promoting inclusive and equitable education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, promoting gender equality in education, promoting sustainable development through education.

In schools, implementation of assessment is impinged by challenges such as: lack of funding in schools for purchasing assessments materials, pressure of schools to focus on standardized tests and examinations, the large class sizes, lack of skills for ensuring fairness, validity and reliability in assessment for diverse student populations, teachers’ inability to balance formative and summative assessments, limited continuous professional development training opportunities for teachers.

Researching through this topic has deepened my understanding of assessment. With this knowledge I intend to create and seize opportunities to share my knowledge with fellow teachers. I also intend to open a You tube channel on which I will be able to reach to a wider audience.

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