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Contributors' attention is drawn to the need to strictly adhere to the guidelines set out in the section on "Notes to Contributors". Contributors must pay particular attention to the statistics used in future papers to ensure that they are appropriate and accurate. The guidelines on tables are to be strictly adhered to. Failure to follow the guidelines will lead to turning down of papers that fail to comply.

This first issue has twelve published articles that are relevant to all levels of education. The articles cover a wide range of interesting topics such as Remediation of students' under achievement, Barriers to and coping initiatives adopted by lecturers, Gender Representation in Mathematics, and using Guidance and Counseling programmes in curbing Examination malpractices.

The services of members of the Editorial Board who took part in the review process are hereby acknowledged.

**Professor (Mrs.) T.A. Bolarin, FNAE**  
**Editor-in-chief**

<i>Editorial Board</i>	iii
<i>Editorial Policy</i>	v
<i>Notes to Contributors</i>	vi
<i>Editorial Brief</i>	vii
Reflection on the Stressors of Anger, Anxiety and Depression and its Implications to Mental Health Education	1
University Education in Nigeria in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century: Challenges and Prospects	14
Assessment as a Tool for Improving Teaching and Learning in Nigerian School System	33
Remediation of Students' Under-Achievements in Perceived Difficult Concepts in Science, Mathematics, and Technology, using Mastery Learning Technique and Problem - Solving Approach	41
Teachers' Perception of Administrative Roles of Secondary School Principals in Nigeria	66
Effects of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy Training in Enhancing Counselling Efficacy of Undergraduate Counselling Practicum Trainees in South-East Nigeria	81
Using Guidance Programmes in Curbing Examination Malpractice in National Open University of Nigeria (Noun)	104
Contemporary Issues in Vocational Agricultural Science Education in Nigeria: the Way Forward	114

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## Assessment as a Tool for Improving Teaching and Learning in Nigerian School System

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores the importance of assessment to teaching and learning in Nigerian school system. It examines assessment from various points of views. Furthermore, labelling from sociological perspectives which include both planned and hidden curriculum was explained. Thus, the study gives more insight that assessment gives feedback to the teachers, students and government in order to learn accountability in their academic work as well as in their personal lives. As such, assessment as a way of feedback helps to improve teaching and learning in the school system.*

**Keywords:** Assessment, teaching, learning, feedback, improvement.

### **Introduction**

Globally, in all school systems, the importance of assessment cannot be overemphasised. Through assessment, individuals take into cognizance the shortcomings of lessons taught especially on the part of the teacher(s); thereafter, on the part of the student(s) on how to improve on his/her studies and for the government to account for whether the products from the system are efficient and competent to display the claimed certificates through the



assessment they have received. Assessment could take various forms in the school system such as summative and formative assessment. However, assessment has never been static. Through assessment, stratification process emerges, and individuals can claim to have ascribed or achieved status. In other words, the position we occupy in our various fields of endeavour is as a result of assessment through the school system and our skills, perhaps, the certificates become the achieved status. Therefore, the ascribed is the position individual inherits through the kinship. In the school system, therefore, assessment could be through written, oral or interview, other forms include criterion referenced, norm referenced, assessing behaviour through observation, labelling among others. Thus the essence of assessment in the school system predicts the improvement of individual students.

### What is Assessment?

Assessment is the process of collecting data for the purpose of making decisions about students (Salvia and Ysseldyke, 1995). From this definition, one could infer that assessment is the process of collecting information about students. Through the assessment of a classroom setting, the assessment of test scores depicts a particular student as an average or an outstanding student. For instance, to assess the reading ability of students normally called 'comprehension', one will give information to the teacher whether student A or B can read fluently or is having difficulty in terms of pronouncing some words. In a similar vein, Tung and Stazesky (2010) assert that assessment could be described as 'product- and behaviour-based measurements based on settings designed to emulate real-life contexts or conditions in which specific knowledge or skills are actually applied'. This definition implies that assessment informs the teachers, students and stakeholders about the performance of the instruction and that of the students. As described by Mislevy (2008):

*Assessment is structuring situations that evoke evidence about students' thinking and acting in terms of these patterns. It is an exercise of meaning – making, narratives about what students know and do (p.3).*

In view of this definition, assessment is basically an evidence about the capability in terms of students' performance and knowledge on the subject matter.

### Sociological Import of Labelling Theory

For every discipline in the education sector, assessment takes different forms. Assessment in the classroom can be through labelling and it can be teacher assessing teacher, teacher assessing students, students assessing fellow students, and students assessing their teachers. Such assessment can be in the classroom or outside the classroom. In other words, teachers can assess a particular student using the concept of labelling by calling the student, good boy, competent, college material, a scholar, mathematician, Karl Marx, bad boy(s), street boy(s), Omo daddy (Daddy's child), Omo Vice – Chancellor (Vice – Chancellor's child) among others.

Here, there are various assessments about individuals. The assessment has both positive and derogatory image. For instance, good boy, competent, mathematician and Karl Marx show that the individual here is intelligent compared to others. However, this assertion at times though positive, could be falsehood. On the other hand, a pupil that is successfully labelled as 'Omo Vice – Chancellor' (Vice – Chancellor's child) is not the biological child of the Vice-Chancellor but an acquaintance, who always receives favour and is hardly punished by the Vice – Chancellor even if he/she is found in gross misconduct.

### Assessment in Improving Teaching and Learning



Assessment plays significant role in the school system. When assessment takes place, it serves as feedback to the teachers, students and stakeholders in the education sector. In view of this, Forum on Educational Accountability (2007) explicitly explained that assessment plays an effective role in improving teaching and learning; and assessment in the classroom setting can strengthen the assessment skills of teachers which include 'selecting and creating' assessment of various kinds, to meet the purpose of classroom instruction. Thus, a great deal of attention given to assessment in the classroom setting helps teaching and learning. For effective assessment to take place, James and Pollard (2006) identify the following steps for effective teaching and learning in the classroom setting:

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING	
<p><b>1. Equips learners for life in its broadcast sense:</b> Learning should aim to help individuals and groups to develop the intellectual, personal and social resources that will enable them to participate as active citizens, contribute to economic development and flourish as individuals in a diverse and changing society. This may mean expanding conceptions of worthwhile learning outcomes and taking seriously issues of equity and social justice for all</p>	<p><b>6. Promotes the active engagement of the learner:</b> A chief goal of teaching and learning should be the promotion of learners' independence and autonomy. This involves acquiring a repertoire of learning strategies and practices, developing positive learning dispositions, and having the will and confidence to become agents in their own learning.</p>

<p><b>2.Engages with valued forms of knowledge:</b> Teaching and learning should engage learners with big ideas, key processes, modes of discourse and narratives of subjects so that they understand what constitutes quality and standards in particular domains.</p>	<p><b>7.Fosters both individual and social processes and outcomes:</b> Learners should be encouraged and helped to build relationships and communication with others for learning purposes, to assist in mutual construction of knowledge and enhance the achievements of individuals and groups. Consulting learners about their learning and giving them a voice is both an expectation and a right.</p>
<p><b>3. Recognises the importance of prior experience and learning:</b>Teaching and learning should take account of what the learner knows already in order to plan their next steps. This includes building on prior learning but also taking account of the personal and cultural experiences of different groups of learners.</p>	<p><b>8.Recognises the significance of informal learning:</b> Informal learning, such as learning out of school, should be recognised as being at least as significant as formal learning and should be valued and used in formal processes.</p>
<p><b>4. Requires the teacher to scaffold learning:</b> Teachers should provide activities and structures of intellectual, social and emotional support to help learners to move forward in their learning so that when these</p>	<p><b>9. Depends on teacher learning:</b> The need for teachers to learn continuously in order to develop their knowledge and skill, and adapt and develop their roles, especially through classroom</p>



supports are removed, the learning is secure.	inquiry, should be recognised and supported.
<b>5. Needs assessment to be congruent with learning:</b> Assessment should be designed and implemented with the goal of achieving maximum validity both in terms of learning outcomes and learning processes. It should help to advance learning as well as determine whether learning has occurred.	<b>10. Demands consistent policy frameworks with support for teaching and learning as their primary focus:</b> Institutional and system-level policies need to recognise the fundamental importance of teaching and learning and be designed to create effective learning environments for all learners.

Source: Adapted from James, M. et al (2006)

From our key elements of assessment of effective teaching and learning in the classroom; assessment, therefore, is a 'feedback focused on helping students to improve and sharing criteria of quality among their peers'. In view of this, Torrance (2007), therefore, remarks that assessment procedures and practices are developed and designed to support learning and underpin instead to undermine and underrate learner's confidence, performance, as well as progress in their academic activities.

In the education sector in Nigeria, assessment and learning has occupied prominent stage in education reform in the nation. In the pre- and post-independence period in Nigeria, assessment has become a major policy lever for improving the education sector. Assessment predicts the potentiality of an individual student and helps to improve the academic work. Shavelson, Young, Ayala, Brandon Furtak (2008) assert that assessment has become an instrument for improving classroom teaching and learning. Thus,

assessment helps to improve learning and it is an integral part of teaching. Therefore, for national development, especially in Nigeria, assessment should be re-emphasised and every form of examination misconduct in Nigerian education sector should be avoided if Nigeria is ready to become a nation of technological know-how.

### Recommendations

- (1) Teachers should hold assessment in high esteem since it will show the shortcomings in order to improve their teaching methods.
- (2) Students should take their studies serious, pay attention to all assessment since it will affect their life chances.
- (3) On the part of the government, it is the responsibility of government to pay more attention to the education sector, fund the sector appropriately in order to have the desired products from the school system.

### Conclusion

Assessment plays a vital role in the Nigerian school system. It is an instrument of accountability for measuring the performance of those involved in teaching and learning. On the part of government, assessment affords an understanding of whether the educational system upholds what would bring development to the nation or to adopt another system of education.



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