

# **CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT: THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOME TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL STUDENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Classroom assessment has been one of the major aspects of focus by academics for years now because it is viewed as a major tool which enhances students' learning in the classroom because of its ability to provide feedback to school managers, teachers and students themselves. Classroom assessment itself is focused on learning and so it requires the active involvement of the parties involved which are mainly the teachers and students in a cooperative manner. To succeed in classroom assessment as in any human endeavour, there is the need for teachers and learners to know the purposes and benefits of classroom assessment in order to be motivated enough to engage in it positively. Hence, this paper discusses the extent of awareness of the purpose and gains of classroom assessment of some Technical and Vocational students through the use of a set of questionnaire. The data obtained was analysed by use of the Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) statistical measurement of central tendency. Based on the results of the analysis, some recommendations to further enhance the cooperation of teachers and students in classroom assessment were made.

## **Introduction**

Motivation is central to any human endeavour. The more motivated anyone is, the better he desires to achieve any set objective (Onjewu, 2006) Motivation itself is driven by the benefits derivable from a given endeavour or task - the purpose. This phenomenon relates to classroom assessment (CA) as well. Like other endeavours, teachers and students need to be positively inclined to it, that is, motivated to engage in it purposefully and with a sustained interest.

Although the purpose of classroom assessment may be obvious to education planners, they may not be well known to teachers and students because they are not involved in the decision to engage in it but are rather implicated to use it by virtue of their being teachers and students.

The purpose of classroom assessment is to empower both teachers and their students to improve the quality of learning in the class (CIDR, n.d.). Being a major component of classroom research it involves students and teachers in a continuous monitoring of students' learning by providing feedback to school management, teachers and students. In the same vein, classroom assessment provides information to parents about their children's learning (Angelo and Cross, 1993).

Brown and Hirschfeld (2008 p.3) in a study, reported that students conceive of assessment in at least four major ways: (i.e., assessment makes students accountable, assessment is relevant because it is bad or unfair, improves the quality of learning and it is enjoyable) and concluded that students who conceive of assessment as a means of taking responsibility for their learning demonstrate increased educational outcomes.

For classroom assessment to succeed, the cooperation of all stake holders is required. On its part, school owners and managers provide the structure and facilities that teachers and students occupy, after which, the teachers and students, very importantly must know why they are in school as well as what they have to do in it and how to do what they have to do. Hence, teachers and students in the classroom must collaborate to make classroom assessment, one of the important activities in learning, succeed.

Meanwhile, this success, no doubt has close ties with motivation. Since classroom assessment has come to stay, educationist should look into ways of making it effective and beneficial. Angelo and Cross (1993) confirm that motivation is essential for the hard work of learning because the higher the motivation the more time and energy a student is willing to devote to any given task, classroom assessment inclusive.

In a document (Anonymous, n.d.) opines that any assessment, including classroom assessment, can be a motivator, being capable of stimulating students' intrinsic interest by:

- emphasizing progress and achievement rather than failure,
- providing feedback to move learning forward,
- reinforcing the idea that students have control over and accept responsibility for their own learning,
- building confidence in students that they can and need to take risks,
- being relevant and appealing to students' imagination, and
- providing the scaffolding that students need to generally succeed.

Against the backdrop of the foregoing, however, Angelo and Cross (1993) have affirmed that students are used to thinking of anything that they have been tested and graded on (as is done in classroom assessment) as being over and done with.

The crux of the matter in this study was therefore to ascertain this stand along with other related parameters in the population of the study.

The significances of such an investigation are obvious. First, this effort is an innovation as far as the population of this study is concerned and secondly, the results and findings obtained here could relate to similar populations in Nigeria and elsewhere.

### **Methodology**

This paper reports the results of a research into some technical students' conception about the purposes of classroom assessment based on their own experiences. The responses obtained formed the basis for the inferences made in the discussion of results and the recommendations given in this paper. The two questions that this research sought answers, to include:

What are the purposes of classroom assessment?

How could the interest of students in classroom assessment be sustained?

### **Population and sample of study**

The population of the study was students of the College of Environmental Studies of Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna, Nigeria. The College comprises seven departments namely:

- Architecture
- Building
- Urban and Regional Planning
- Estate Management
- Environmental Studies
- Quantity Surveying
- Survey and Geometrics

The departments all have students at four levels namely National Diploma One and Two (NDI and II) and Higher National Diploma One and Two (HND I and II). Studies in the departments, as is the practice in all Polytechnics in Nigeria, lead to the graduation of students from NDII to earn a National Diploma Certificate and HND II to earn a Higher National Diploma Certificate. The choice of this population was hinged on its relevance in the provision of middle level manpower in Technical Education (T E) in Nigeria now desirable to catapult the nation towards technological growth and independence.

From the population, a sample of HND I students in all the departments was drawn. The choice of the HND I students was informed by the fact that they are mature, have experienced classroom assessment previously and would still engage in it till the completion of their courses. Their participation in the completion of the questionnaire could sharpen their focus on the purposes of classroom assessment as they could gain some insights from the items on the questionnaire capable of motivating them in subsequent classroom assessment practice. The sample size was 588 students.

### **Instrumentation**

A set of questionnaire was specifically designed for the study. It comprised ten items written in a likert scale format with a five point rating of 1 – 5. The reliability and validity of the instrument was tested in a pilot study earlier conducted to ascertain whether it was suitable to generate the desired response from the sample.

### **Results and Analysis of Data**

The data collected was analyzed using the mean  $(\bar{x})$  statistical technique being a measure of central tendency in which the numerical values of questionnaire was based on the following key:

<b>Response</b>	<b>Points</b>
Strongly agree (SA)	5
Agree (A)	4
Undecided (U)	3
Strongly Disagreed (SD)	2
Disagree (D)	1

The decision was based on the obtained mean for each response where a mean of 0.0 – 2.9 was interpreted to mean a rejection and a mean of 3.0 -5.0 was interpreted to mean the acceptance of a parameter.

The summary of the data obtained was:

Questionnaire Item	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
1	4.5	Accepted
2	4.4	Accepted
3	4.2	Accepted
4	4.6	Accepted
5	2.5	Rejected
6	4.2.	Accepted
7	4.4	Accepted
8	1.9	Rejected
9	3.3	Accepted
10	4.6	Accepted

From the results presented in the table above, item one sought to know if students conceived of their success in CA as contributing to their success in examination and the mean obtained was 4.5 which meant they accepted. On whether CA was purposeful to both lecturers and students, that is, if it enabled both lecturers and students to know the extent of the understanding of what was taught to students the means obtained were 4.4 and 4.2 respectively. Precisely then, the students accepted that CA enabled their lecturers and themselves to know if they had understood what was taught. Item four of the questionnaire enquired whether CA was necessary for learning and the mean of 4.6 obtained showed that the students also accepted the view. Item 5 was meant as a check on item 4 of the questionnaire. The mean of 2.5 obtained meant that the students did not agree with the view that CA was not desirable to students. Therefore, the result of the mean meant that the students were of the view that CA was desirable to them. Item six established the relationship between the areas taught in class and questions asked in CA. the mean of 4.2 calculated indicated a high relationship, therefore, the students were unanimous in their view that CA questions covered areas taught in class. Relatedly, the mean of 4.4 obtained for item seven revealed that students relied on their results in CA as a cue to know how much effort to put into semester examinations. Item eight and nine concerned students' interest in knowing their CA result prior to examination and the means of 1.9 and 3.3 obtained indicated that they were always interested in knowing their CA scores prior to taking examination. Item 8 was presented to students in the negative, hence, the mean of 1.9 was a rejection that otherwise meant the acceptance of the opposite view. Item 10 sought to know if CA was seen by the students as an integral part of examination and the mean of 4.6 obtained was a clear indication that they agreed.

The foregoing interpretation of data could be summarized as follows:

Students were of the view that:

- their success in CA contributes to their examination success,
- lecturers and students rely on CA to ascertain how much students have learnt what was taught,
- students desire to be engaged in CA because they see it as a necessity to pass any examination,
- students use the exercise in CA as a cue of the examination and CA results guide their preparation for examination,
- students are very interested to always know their results in C.A in order to determine how much preparation to make for examination,
- students know that CA is part and parcel of examination.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Results obtained from the data showed that students knew what CA is and had been engaging in it for the purposes of helping them to be successful in their studies, knowing how much of what was taught that was understood, guiding them on how much preparation to make for up coming examinations as well as taking the clue of examination questions from CA questions. Contrary to the view of Angelo and Cross (1993), the students did not see CA as an end in itself but as a means to succeed in their studies and examination.

However, because, it is one thing to accept a practice (as in this case, engaging in C.A) and it is another thing to have sustained interest in it so that success in it continues to improve, this paper makes the following recommendations:

- teachers should always arrange to engage in CA at the beginning of their course (s), and continue in the same vein at conducive intervals throughout the course (s),
- teachers should ensure that all CA exercises are concluded well ahead of examinations,
- teachers should show the marks that students have earned from classroom assessment to them.
- students should be allowed some amount of flexibility in the form of CA to engage in, for instance, some students might prefer an oral exercise for a particular task while others may prefer a written one,
- teachers should make out time for the revision of all CA exercises,
- there should be high quality record keeping of all CA marks by both teachers and students to promote transparency and trust between them,
- students who consistently do well in CA should be praised in a manner which does not ridicule the others but encourages all of them to work harder.

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