



**Education in Nigeria:
LOOKING BEYOND
THE 21ST CENTURY
A BOOK OF READING**

Edited by

**Kolawole C.O.O., Bagudo A.A., Moronkola O.A.,
Akinkuotu A.O., Babarinde S.A.,
Ojedokun I.M. & Meroyi S.I.**

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Amosun M. D. P.hD & Olatujayan E. A.

Department of Teacher of Education

Early Childhood Unit

University of Ibadan, Ibadan,

E-mail: amosunmoses@gmail.com,

olatuayanemmanuel@gmail.com

Phone: 08160122518, 07062175617

Introduction

Education refers to the process or designated framework for transferring skills, values and principles from one generation to another. It is a known fact that the goal of education in any country is usually tied to the yearnings and aspirations of the people or society at large. Early childhood education therefore evolved its processes from this generally accepted phenomenon, as foremost educational institutions involved in training children are saddled with the responsibility of developing holistic educational programme and organisation process to achieve these lofty goals. But in achieving these goals and values, the programmes developed in the teaching and learning process of the average Nigerian preschool child must be systematically evaluated and assessed with the sole aim of discovering the extent to which these societal values have been imbibed by the children. This child assessment is a vital and necessary component of all high-quality early childhood

programmes. The purpose of assessment is to support learning, identify special needs, evaluate a programme, monitor trends and serve high stake accountability requirements which reflect the nation's values, goals and aspirations. It is important to realise that there are many purposes of assessment, such as for diagnostic, for programme evaluation, for determining school readiness and for screening developmental delays or learning difficulties (Shephard, 2005).

The process of assessing young children is especially important and different from assessment process of other age group because of the way children learn, by constructing knowledge in experiential, interactive, concrete and hands-on ways rather than through abstract reasoning and paper and pencil activities alone (Bredenkamp and Rosegrant, 1995). For effective assessment procedure, it is important that appropriate assessment practices are employed in measuring values which are of interest to teachers and other parties involved in assessment. This assertion is boldly reiterated by Early Learning Standards Task Force (2005) which notes that the major purpose of assessment, regardless of age, is to help teachers make appropriate instructional decisions about how to best teach children. The measurement of the skills learned by young children must rely upon practices that fit expected learning skills and behaviour and then change, as appropriate, to support children as they grow and develop. For example, young children learn and exhibit their learning in different ways than older children. Young children learn by doing rather than just listening and may best exhibit what they know in actions rather than writing.

Furthermore, for effective assessment of the child, it is imperative that the teacher must understand what assessment seeks to achieve as well as become conversant with different assessment tools which can measure different values and presents a balanced picture of the child's development. Assessment tools generally fall into two major divisions namely, formal assessments which usually

entail the use of standardised tests that must be administered according to prescribed time limits, instructional and scoring procedures and administration guidelines. It usually falls into the following categories; achievement tests, intelligence tests, diagnostic tests (Vacc, Vacc, and Fogleman, 1987). Informal assessments rely more heavily on observational and work sampling techniques that continually focus on child performance processes and products over selected periods of time and in variety of contexts. Methods such as anecdotal record, portfolio play-based assessment, running records, rating scale, checklist, and work sample fall into this category (Gronlund, 1998; Honig, 1996)

Recent assessment procedures in Nigeria entails the use of continuous assessment process as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) where it was stated that educational assessment and evaluation will be liberalised by basing them in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual. Continuous assessment grading system requires the assessment of the changes in behaviours in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, but the extent to which this is achieved among early childhood practitioners is very low. This may be as a result of over-emphasis on cognitive achievement by teachers and parents. Assessment is aimed at finding out how much a child has acquired in terms of learning skills but does not take into consideration the personal-social development of the child in Nigerian schools. Assessment most often than not, is concentrated on cognitive achievement to the detriment of affective and psychomotor development (Adeyemi, 2012). In simple terms, Nigeria has progressively laid great emphasis on the use of paper and pencil test which forms the sole vehicle of most continuous assessment procedure and grading thereby defeating the aim of assessment as both teachers and parents are more concerned with the score and grade levels of children as a testament of their level of educational prowess.

Most times, the over-emphasis of preschool educational institutions on cognitive prowess has progressively led to some children being termed as brilliant or dull based on their scores in paper and pencil tests often conducted by these educational institutions. This over emphasis on paper and pencil tests destroys the goal of assessment which now shifts from discovering inherent traits in children and understanding how to help them as well as develop programmes which will help them in inculcating the right values rather than baseless grading of children vertically as high or low. Many preschool teachers do not consider the fact that to learn, young children must touch and manipulate objects, build and create in many media, listen and act out stories and everyday roles, talk and sing, and move and play in various ways and environments. Consequently, the expression of what children know and can do which represents assessment would be best served in ways other than traditional paper and pencil assessment which currently forms the description of continuous assessment (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1995).

Different research works carried out have proved that different countries of the world are progressively developing new assessment procedures which not only take into consideration the goal of assessment but also seek to position parents and the society as a whole in the evaluation process of the average preschool child (NAEYC and NAECS 2009). Apart from developing other assessment tools which takes into consideration the needs of children and the real purpose of assessing them, the active role of parents as an accelerating and motivating factor in their children's literary and assessment acquisition has also been adopted as a viable means of facilitating appropriate assessment process. This is well-supported by some research works (Fan and Chen, 2001; Henderson and Map, 2002). The use of home inventories as a viable parental assessment contribution in evaluation process has been given a global lift and consideration as well (NAEYC, 2009). This is especially important

because no two children are the same and each child has a uniqueness of his or her own. Furthermore, no two children have the same family, cultural, and experiential backgrounds. Clearly, these variables mean that a "one size fits all" assessment will not meet the needs of most young children (Shepard, Kagan and Wurtz, (1998). The inability of parents and teachers to understand the purpose of preschool child assessment, the appropriate assessment tools as well as the importance of the role of parents in assessment of preschoolers is a serious issue. This may lead to a situation where the current assessment tools and process neglect concrete values that need to be assessed in different child care teaching and learning centers. The implication of this for Nigerian children is that, it may distort the development that they need for logical, problem-solving and creative skills that are needed for life-long learning in and beyond the 21st century. The justification for this study is borne out of the fact that something has to be done to address the situation.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed by scholars that over the years in Nigeria, the prevalent method of assessment in pre-school has been the formal type which relies heavily on paper and pencil activities. Its over emphasis on cognitive ability of children has progressively led to some children being termed as brilliant or dull based on their scores. This over emphasis on paper and pencil tests destroys the goal of assessment which is to help teachers make appropriate instructional decisions about how to best teach children. The researchers feel that negative attitude on the part of both parents and teachers and their lack of knowledge on the purpose of assessing children and use of inappropriate assessment tools may be the factors responsible for these gaps. Therefore, the paper investigated teachers' and parents' knowledge and attitudes to effective assessment process in Ondo metropolis.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do parents and teachers understand the purpose of assessing a child?
2. To what extent do parents and preschool teachers possess the knowledge and use of other assessment tools apart from paper and pencil test in evaluating preschool children?
3. To what extent do parents realise the importance of getting involved in assessment process and the relative impact on values developed by their children?

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey method. This study used multi-stage sampling technique in the selection of the sample, while simple sampling technique was used to select five local government areas in Ondo metropolis. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select five public and five private participating schools from each selected local government area in Ondo metropolis based on the following criteria, schools with functional preschool attached to it as well as the number of pupils not being less than five in the classroom. Purposive sampling technique was used to select participating preschool teachers based on the following criteria: The preschool teachers must be qualified with the minimum qualification of grade 2 and must be working with preschool children of ages 3-6. In all, a total of 303 parents and 100 preschool teachers were used, 20 from each local government area. The researcher made use of two validated research instruments namely: (1) Preschool Teachers' Assessment Knowledge and Attitude Questionnaire (PTAKAQ) and (2) Parents Assessment Knowledge and Attitude Questionnaire (PAKAQ). The data gathered were analysed by using frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent is the knowledge of parents' and preschool teachers' on the purpose of assessing a child?

Table 1: Parents' Knowledge on the Purpose Assessing a Child

Range	N	Frequency	%	Mean	Std.D	Remarks
0-3	303	48	15.9			Somehow
4-5	303	237	78.3	4.261	0.858	Aware
6-8	303	18	6			

Table 1 reveals that parents are aware of the purpose of assessing a child. Parents that are aware (78%), Parents that are not aware (15%) and parents that are very much aware (6%).

b. To what extent is the knowledge of preschool teachers' on the purpose of assessing a child?

Table 2: Preschool Teachers' Knowledge on the Purpose Assessing a Child

Range	N	Frequency	%	Mean	Std.D	Remarks
0-3	100	6	6.0			Somehow
4-5	100	57	57.0	5.180	1.009	Aware
6-8	100	37	37.0			

Table 2 reveals that preschool teachers' are aware of the purpose of assessing a child. It also shows the Preschool teachers that are aware (57%), preschool teachers that are very much aware (37%), and preschool teachers that are not aware (6%).

Research Question 2: To what extent do parents and preschool teachers' possess the knowledge on the use of other assessment tools apart from continuous assessment in evaluating preschool children?

- a. To what extent do parents' possess the knowledge on the use of other assessment tools apart from continuous assessment in evaluating preschool children?

Table 3: Parents' Knowledge on the Use of Other Assessment Tools

Range	N	Frequency	%	Mean	Std.D	Remarks
0-3	303	266	67.9			Not
4-5	303	26	4.6	2.376	1.132	Aware
6-8	303	11	-			

Table 3 reveals that parents' are not aware of the use of other of assessment tools apart from continuous assessment in evaluating preschool children. Parents that are not aware (68%) and (5%) parents that are somehow aware.

- b. To what extent do preschool teachers' possess the knowledge on the use of other assessment tools apart from continuous assessment in evaluating preschool children?

Table 4: Preschool Teachers' Knowledge on the Use of Other Assessment Tools

Range	N	Frequency	%	Mean	Std.D	Remarks
0-3	100	23	23.0			Somehow
4-5	100	77	77.0	4.010	0.718	Aware
6-8	100	-	-			

Table 4 reveals that preschool teachers' have awareness of the use of other assessment tools apart from continuous assessment in evaluating preschool children. 77% preschool teachers who are aware and 23% preschool teachers who are not aware are indicated on the table.

Research Question 3: To what extent do parents realise the importance of getting involved in their children's assessment process?

Table 5: Parents' Level of Involvement in their Children' Assessment Process

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. D	Remarks
1	Assessment must be carried out frequently	47 (15.5)	224 (73.9)	12 (4.0)	20 (6.6)	2.984	0.678	Agree
2	Different tools should be used when assessing a child	69 (22.8)	204 (67.3)	30 (9.9)	-	3.129	0.558	Agree
3	The skills or values discovered in the child is influenced by the choice of assessment tools	56 (18.5)	209 (69.0)	28 (9.2)	10 (3.3)	3.026	0.640	Agree
4	Assessment process should measure other values apart from cognitive skills	80(26.4)	184(60.7)	26 (8.6)	13(4.3)	3.092	0.717	Agree
5	Parents or guardians should be part of assessment process	17(5.6)	17 (5.6)	155 (51.2)	114 (37.6)	1.792	0.785	Disagree
6	Assessment must be carried out not	168 (55.4)	125 (41.3)	10 (3.3)	-	3.488	0.670	Strongly Agree

	only to grade but discover how to help the child learn better							
7	Assessing a child should help in discovering unique traits and skills in the child	62 (20.5)	230 (75.9)	11 (3.6)	-	3.168	0.462	Agree
8	Nigeria assessment process should be more than paper and pencil test	121 (39.9)	156 (51.5)	10 (3.3)	16 (5.3)	3.261	0.760	Agree
9	Assessment should be embraced and not feared by children	103 (34.0)	184 (60.7)	16 (5.3)	-	3.287	0.558	Agree
10	Assessment must not be limited to what the teacher taught but also what the child can construct personally		23 (7.6)	107 (35.3)	173 (57.1)	1.505	0.635	Disagree
Weighted Average = 2.87 (71.83%)								

Table 5 reveals that assessment must be carried out not only to grade but discover how to help the child learn better (mean=3.49), assessment should be embraced and not feared by children (mean=3.29), Nigeria assessment process should be more than paper and pencil test (mean=3.26), assessing a child should help

in discovering unique traits and skills in the child (3.17), Different tools should be used when assessing a child(mean=3.13), the skills or values discovered in the child is influenced by the choice of assessment tools(mean=3.03), assessment process should measure other values apart from cognitive skills (mean=3.09), assessment must be carried out frequently(mean=2.98), parents or guardians should be part of assessment process(mean=1.79), assessment must not be limited to what the teacher taught but also what the child can construct personally(mean=1.51).

The weighted average is 2.87 which can be rated as 72%. This implies that parents agree with the importance of getting involved in their children's assessment process.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study is that parents and teachers are at different level of awareness of the purpose of assessing a preschool child while the parents and teachers are aware of the purpose of assessment; it is evident that the teachers' level of awareness is more than that of the parents. This may be connected to the fact that teachers are more trained to teach and conduct assessment giving them the edge over parents. With the aforementioned fact, it can be concluded that both parents and teachers are still not completely aware of the importance of assessment and this may affect the assessment process.

The second finding also revealed that majority of the parents are not aware of other types of assessment tools that can be employed when assessing a child, even though teachers are aware of other types of assessment tools to some extent. It is evident that the level of awareness of other types of assessment tools apart from the traditional paper and pencil test which is employed in continuous assessment process in Nigeria is relatively low among parents and teachers in the Ondo metropolis. The implication of this is that, this

may lead to a situation where most teachers and schools do not make use of these tools thereby creating a situation where the only value which is measured is the cognitive value. This finding corroborates Adeyemi (2012) who asserted that Nigerian schools only measure cognitive values while at the same time neglecting other values such as the affective and psychomotor. Poor parental awareness of other types of assessment tools most especially tools that can be used by parents at home also leads to a situation where majority of the parents leave the assessment process of their preschool children to teachers alone as majority of them hardly know that there are tools which can be used to assess a child even at home. The reason behind this might be because most parents simply believe that teachers are supposed to be the ones solely involved with assessment process while majority of the teachers simply believe that the true test of a child prowess should be tied to paper and pencil evaluation. Though majority of them are aware that there are other assessment tools, they hardly make use of them.

The last finding which seeks to discover the attitude of parents and teachers towards salient facts on preschool assessment process revealed that majority of the parents and teachers are favourably disposed to the different points such as the timing of assessments, traits expected in the assessed child among other variables but the parents also disagreed with two vital points which are their levels of involvement with assessment process as well as the ability of the child to construct knowledge. These vital points do not erase the fact that majority of teachers and parents are properly disposed to changes in assessment process yet the level of participation of parents in the child assessment is vital even though most parents rejected it. Furthermore the ability of a child to develop and construct knowledge was also frowned at as it is evident that the concept of *tabula rasa* which means that the child knows nothing and the teachers are to teach and not facilitate unravelling of knowledge on the child's part still holds sway among most parents and teachers.

Conclusion

This study was designed to find out the level of awareness of knowledge as well as attitude of parents and teachers to assessment process of preschool children in Ondo metropolis. It was discovered that both parents and teachers need to improve on their knowledge as regards the use and the purpose of assessment in spite of their favourable disposition to it. Furthermore the types of assessment tools which is needed to facilitate appropriate assessment process are really relatively unknown to most parents and teachers and it was also discovered that teachers and parents need to participate more in the evaluation process of the preschoolers by understanding that children have inherent skills in them which may not be discovered by teachers alone.

Recommendations

Based on the findings recorded in this study, the following are recommended for better preschool practices in Ondo metropolis:

- I. Increased sensitization should be carried out to properly orientate both teachers and parents on the purpose of assessing preschool children, care must be taken to help them understand that a pre-schooler is not necessarily assessed based on cognitive ability alone but also based on affective and psychomotor disposition to knowledge.
- II. Furthermore, different assessment tools which can foster the proper measurement of various values should be made available to teachers as well as parents so that evaluation process will be carried out with the sole aim of helping the child grow optimally by unravelling different skills and values.
- III. Proper orientation of the potentials and possibilities of the child should be made to help parents and teachers understand the latent abilities of the child in constructing knowledge and developing attributes and skills which are

not taught by the teacher or parents. Parents should also receive orientation on the importance of getting involved in their children's assessment process.

- IV. Parents and Teachers should be trained on the need for the use of developmentally appropriate assessment tools which can enhance holistic development and education of pre-school children beyond 21st century rather than using only paper and pencil assessment.

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