

Assessment Challenges in Large Classes in Developing Countries an Implication to Science and Technical Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

Large classes are now a common feature in Technical and Vocational Education due to rapid increase in students' enrolment couple with not expanding of educational facilities in the existing schools. As a result, there are a lot of challenges poses to assessment. This article identified and discuss some of the assessment challenges in large classes and straggles or method to be used in dealing with the challenges. Secondary data such as textbooks, journal articles, conference papers and online resources were used as sources for data. Conclusion and recommendations were made based on the assessment challenges identified.

Keywords: Large Class, Assessment, Vocational and Technical Education

Introduction

Assessment within the school setting is the process of gathering information and monitoring learners' progress and consequently to make educational decision. According to UNESCO as cited in NTI (2020) is the systematic process of generating or gathering data about individual students behaviour. Assessment of learners are inevitable at every stages of education. Teaching and learning cannot be meaningful without measuring the desirable learning outcomes of the learners. Assessment is an embracing term which include application of various measuring instruments to obtain information from the learner. It may include questionnaire, interview, test and others. Assessment is a means whereby the teacher obtains information about knowledge gains, behavioural changes, mastery of skills and other aspects of development (Sehabudi. Mlyadi and Puspita. (2019). A good teacher should be able to assess the progress of his learners. Good knowledge of where the learners are and how the learners are progressing helps the teacher to effectively cater to the needs of learners. The construction of a good test is an important skill every teacher must acquire.

Assessment in the context of science and technology education therefore, is the systematic process of finding out whether knowledge, practical, skills and attitudes so defined in the curriculum are acquired by students. The data generated through the assessment process are used for passing judgement i.e. Excellent. Very Good, Good and so on. Large classes are known a common feature in the school system in developing countries. By large classes it means a class size of more than normal. Thus more than 40 students for a theory class and more than 24 students for practical lesson as set by NBTE as a minimum standard for technical and vocational education Ughammadu (1994). Assessment of learning in large class is extremely problematic if not impossible. This is

because there are quite a lot of students, work ranges from practical skills in the training centers, laboratories to theories in classroom to be validly assessed and above all that are diversities in talents and interest.

Purposes of Classroom Assessment

Assessment is an actively normally carried out by teachers for a number of reasons as provided by Anikweze (2012), there are three levels of assessment purposes that interplay of which has led to the conventional categorization of assessment into different types

1. Assessment is carried out for the purpose of evaluation. To pass judgement on the performance of students which concerns the technical aim of assessment event, example, derivation of standard reference which is expressed as a grade on a range of A to F
2. Assessment is carried out in order to determine the learning progress and to make decision, action or process which enable for the placement as well as the selection of the students for the admission into a course or vocation.
3. Assessment is carried out in order to motivate students to learn. The impact level which concerns the intended impacts of running assessment system is motivating and advising the students to study.

Assessment in Large Classes

Assessment in large classes normally poses a challenge for majority of classroom teachers due to; the increase chance of inconsistency in making, grading and the supervision/invigilation of the students; diverse student backgrounds and the practicality of providing sufficient and immediate evaluative feedback to individual students.

Principles Guiding Assessment in Technical and Vocational Education

1. Assessment in Technical and Vocational Education must cover the three domains of learning; cognitive-thinking; psychomotor; practice, skills and affective which deals with attitudes, interest, feelings and values among others. However, emphasis must be giving in teaching and assessing skills and practical in laboratories.
2. Assessment in Technical and Vocational Education should be carried out several times using different assessment tools such as observation, experimentation, practical, demonstration of skills, group project/work, field trip and questionnaire.
3. Assessment should promote and enhance learning not to frustrate, punish or victimize students.

Assessment Challenges in Large Classes

Large classes are now a common feature in Technical and Vocational Education due to rapid increase in students' enrolment couple with not expanding of educational facilities in the existing schools. As a result, there are a lot of challenges poses to assessment as provided by Smith and Hassan (2008) Some of the major challenges are outlined below.

1. Students feel lost because of the high number of enrolment making it difficult for individualized assessment for enhancing learning.
2. Opportunities for assessment of practical lessons may be reduced because of the large class size.
3. Difficulty of supervising and invigilation which lead to cheating and plagiarism.
4. Giving immediate and sufficient evaluative feedback which allow students to learn from their mistake may be reduced.

5. Opportunities for several assessments of students may be reduced because of high volume of work involved and time required.
6. Excessive making load reduced the teachers' effectiveness.

Strategies for Assessing Large Classes

Because of the challenges pose on teaching and learning as well as assessment, realistic concrete and practical methods are required in order to overcome some of the challenges. These methods are:

1. Use of online assessment such as electronically submission of assignment and marking them electronically; labelling of online diagram; online multiple-choice; using goggle classroom and completion of online quizzes.
2. Group project or work with guides: providing learning guides based on what are to be assessed will help students to know what they should know before the assessment.
3. Peer review; making use of students to assess themselves by providing and couching them on the marking scheme.
4. Group assignment through classroom presentation.
5. Computer Assisted Assessment; employing software to assess principles involved in practical work. The software allows questions to be posed, answers and entered by students and marked via the computer.
6. Using online role play
7. Seminar presentation; students to organize and present seminars and assess each other.
8. Using Electronic Audience Response System which provides interaction between the presenter and students and provides immediate evaluative feedback.
9. Conducting a mini-quiz before commencement of practical lessons.
10. Using problem Based Learning for assessment: it involves giving students a problem to solve which will require them to analyze; identify important points; researching on one; summarizing, analyzing and evaluating the literature; communicating findings in writing and then evaluating the work in the light of the new information. Thereafter students do another one for the grade, equivalent to CA grade. Assessment will be based on quality of important point identified, rationale for choosing one from many, ability to evaluate one's work

Conclusion

The article describes the meaning and purposes. Also, the challenges of assessment in large class and methods/ strategies for managing them. Assessment in a large class size can be subjective if adequate steps are not taken to make it learning friendly. Therefore, teachers should spend more time learning strategies for approaching assessment and relating to large class. Some of the methods highlighted in this article will go a long way in helping to reduce the problems.

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