

Assessment of Pupils' Development and Learning at Childhood Education Level in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract - The study examined the improvement and learning needs of children in primary schools. The study was carried out in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. A total sample size of 80 respondents (teachers) was drawn through simple random sampling technique. The researcher developed 20 items structured questionnaire titled: Teachers' Assessment of Children Development and Learning (TACDL) used for data collection. The instrument was face validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 was established for the instrument using Cronbach's Alpha method. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The findings of the study showed that the aspect of children's cognitive development and learning were been mainly assessed by teachers at the primary school level while the psychomotor and affective domains of child's development are often ignored. The findings of the study also revealed that reading skills and recitation are often the priority areas of assessment. In view of these findings, it was recommended among others that government should organize regular assessment training workshops, seminars and conferences to train primary school teachers on assessment techniques that emphasize the development of the learning domains including the cognitive, psychomotive and affective domains of development.

Index Terms- Assessment, Childhood education, Child development, Learning, Primary Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment could be seen as the processes of assessing learners' performance in the classroom. It encompasses all the techniques, tools and procedures involved in ensuring the attainment of instructional goals (Gillis, West & Coleman, 2015). Assessment could mean a tool that provides progress information or feedbacks to teachers and school administrators about the level of attainment of institutional or instructional objectives. According to Lewis (2011), assessment is a basic classroom practice that engenders improvement. Haggai, Bahago and Guyit (2001) viewed assessment as tools for gathering information about learners' progress and instructional objectives. Thus, assessment enables instructors to monitor pupils' development in all domains of learning (Gillis et al., 2015). It provides teachers with useful information for planning and decision making. Assessment is therefore required for quality output in childhood education.

A teacher is a professionally trained person whose obligation is to achieve the curriculum objectives or educational plans (Araekwe & Ozigbo, 2001). The teacher along these lines, as indicated by Edozie (2017) is an individual with enrolled proficient capability that empowers him to be selected to educate in any perceived educational establishment. A teacher is a sound personality that is alert to pupil's learning needs in the classroom. In other words, a teacher is the medium through which information, knowledge or experiences are transmitted to pupils in the school classroom (Edozie, 2017). Thus, an effective teacher who wants to achieve his/her classroom instructional objectives ought to be knowledgeable in methodological issues and strategic assessment techniques and practices in the classroom. An effective teacher therefore strives to provide suitable learning experiences to achieve the desired learning objectives (Egbo, 2015). Thus, the teacher should be knowledgeable enough that classroom

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instructions must aim at fostering creativity, hands-on learning or active participation in the learning process. In respect to that, Edozie (2017) noted that foundational childhood education in primary schools should seek to provide holistic experiences and development in all the domains namely cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills or domains. In view of that, the Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN] (2004) urges teachers to lay emphasis on the development of pupil's creative abilities, oracy, attitude as well as numerical literacy. In line with the above statement, Rhode Island Development of Education (2013) highlighted some areas of childhood development to include:

- Physical health and motor development: In this domain, assessment tools should emphasize on physical fitness activities and manipulative motor skills
- Social and emotional development: This aspect assesses the child's social, intra and interpersonal skills as well as feelings, attitude and relationships with others (team spirit).
- Language development: The pupil's language ability is to be assessed.
- Cognitive development: The assessment tools must take care of children's improvement in their cognitive abilities/understanding of specific concepts or phenomena.
- Mathematics: The assessment in this domain focuses on the knowledge of basic mathematical concepts, counting skills, recognition and identification of objects and shapes skills.
- Science: Here, the assessment focuses on pupil's development in their use of senses for observation and knowledge about the surrounding environment.
- Social studies: Here, the assessment tools focus on morals, norms and values.
- Creative Arts domain: The emphasis here is on performance skills in music, dancing, drama, gestures as well as molding and drawing of objects, coloring and painting.

In line with the above statements, Gillis, West and Coleman (2014) and Uzodinma, Onwura and Dike (2018) observed that there must be holistic developmental assessment programmes that engender pupil's development and learning in all the domains. No doubt, such foundational childhood education and training is necessary for the overall development of children. As indicated in the nation's educational policy document (FRN, 2004), Childhood education is the education and training given to children within the ages of about four to eleven. Childhood stages include both the early/nursery and primary stages of learning (Haggai, Bahago & Guyit, 2001). It is a basic period for both physical and mental development of children. However, the study focuses on the development and learning of primary school children.

Primary education is the most significant in ones educational career. It is the foundation level and as such deserves good educational foundation at this level (Egbo, 2015). Children require functional skills to cope with and solve problems in life (Okere, 2005). Thus, the importance of primary education and its overall goals were stressed by the FRN (2004) to include: Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively; Lay a sound basis for scientific and critical and reflective thinking; Promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity; Instill morals and values in the child; Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment; and Provide opportunities for children to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.

To achieve these goals, Government emphasizes the key role of the classroom teacher and instructional assessment for the overall functioning of education at the primary education level in Nigeria (FRN, 2004). The implication is that, primary education forms the base and foundation of the nation's educational system. Therefore, sustainable development cannot be achieved without first emphasizing or building a strong foundational childhood educational structure at the primary school level. To achieve that, both Haggai et al. (2001) and Uzodinma et al. (2018) are of the view that teachers should to undergo professional training programmes on how to promote effective childhood developmental education and training through strategic assessment techniques. These therefore call for the need to improve primary education through strategic assessment practices.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the developmental areas/domains assessed by primary teachers in the study area. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain areas of pupil’s development do teachers assess in childhood education at primary school level?
2. ascertain areas of pupil’s development and learning do teachers need training order to assess.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What areas of pupil’s development do teachers assess in childhood education at primary school level?
2. What areas of pupil’s development and learning do teachers need training order to assess?

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The design was considered appropriate because according to Nworgu (2018), descriptive survey design allows the researcher to collect data and describe events/phenomena the way they occur without manipulation. The study was conducted in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State. Two research questions were guided the study. The populace comprised of all the primary school teachers in Aguata Education Zone. The sample consists of 80 respondents (teachers) drawn through simple random sampling technique. A researcher developed 20items structured questionnaire titled Teachers’ Assessment of Children’s Development and Learning (TACDL) was the main instrument used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three lecturers. Specifically, two experts in Childhood Education - Department of Educational Foundation and one in Educational Measurement and Evaluation - Department of Science Education, all from Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A reliability coefficient value of 0.70 was established for the instrument using Cronbach-Alpha method.

The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) was used to answer the research questions. Any item with the mean of 2.50 and above was considered while items that rated below 2.50 were considered not required.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Questions 1: What areas of pupil’s development do teachers assess in childhood education at primary school level in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of teacher’s responses to developmental area assessed at primary school level

S/N	Teachers Assessment	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Cognitive skills (Reading, Recitation, Memorizing of facts/ideas)	3.31	1.08	Agree
2	Oracy/Language abilities	3.19	0.81	Agree
3	Numeracy (Counting of numbers, Recognition of shapes and colors)	3.26	0.79	Agree
4	Psychomotor development (hands-on activities/motor skills)	1.26	0.82	Disagree
5	Creativity (Drawing, Coloring, Building of blocks)	1.14	0.56	Disagree
6	Learning needs such as toys	1.05	0.21	Disagree
7	Cultural activities (Dancing, Singing, Drama)	1.08	0.26	Disagree
8	Emotional development (Adjustment to new situations)	1.11	0.31	Disagree
9	Strength and weaknesses in use of motor skills	1.06	0.24	Disagree
10	Affection/Attitude towards classroom activities	1.01	0.11	Disagree

Table 1: shows that the aspect of children’s cognitive development and learning were been effectively assessed in primary schools in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State. However, the results on the table indicate that children’s development of psychomotor/creative skills, attitude, feelings or affective domains are not often assessed by teachers. Thus, three items that elicited information on assessment of cognitive development were rated 2.5 and above while other items that sort information on creativity/motor skills and attitude as well as affective domains rated below 2.5 respectively.

Research Question 2: What areas of pupil’s development and learning do teachers need training order to assess?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviations of teacher’s responses on pupils’ developmental areas that teachers need training in order to asses properly?

S/N	Teachers Assessment Needs	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Physical development	3.03	0.76	Agree
12	Cognitive development (Counting of numbers, Recognition of shapes and colors)	2.99	0.60	Agree
13	Oracy/language development	2.90	0.66	Agree
14	Social behaviour and skills (team spirit, cooperation with others, friendliness)	3.39	0.66	Agree
15	Emotional development (Adjustment to new situations and Feelings)	2.88	0.86	Agree
16	Creativity (Drawing, Coloring, Building of blocks)	3.40	0.60	Agree
17	Psychomotor development (Hands-on activities/motor skills)	3.79	0.44	Agree
18	Strength and weaknesses in motor abilities	3.65	0.48	Agree
19	Cultural activities (Dancing, Singing, Drama)	3.75	0.51	Agree
20	Attitude towards classroom activities	3.74	0.52	Agree

Table 2 shows the opinions of respondents that teachers need assessment training on the different aspects of children’s development. The results in table two indicate that, items 11-20 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and above. Therefore, the areas of pupil’s development and learning that teachers requires training order are physical development, cognitive development (counting of numbers, recognition of shapes and colors), oracy/language development, social behaviour and skills (team spirit, cooperation with others, friendliness), emotional development (adjustment to new situations and Feelings), creativity (drawing, coloring, building of blocks), psychomotor development (hands-on activities/motor skills), strength and weaknesses in motor abilities, cultural activities (dancing, singing, drama) and attitude towards classroom activities

DISCUSSION

The findings showed that children’s cognitive specific areas involving recognition, counting, reading and reciting are often given priority attention in teacher’s assessment programmes over the psychomotor and affective skills. The finding agrees with Haggai et al. (2001) and Uzodinma et al. (2018) who noted that assessment was not carried out to improve children’s development and learning in all the domains specifically the psychomotor and affective skills. This could be as a result of qualified teachers at the primary school level in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the finding regarding research question two indicates that teachers need some training in the areas of assessment of psychomotor skills, attitude and affective domains. This finding is consistent with Gillis et al. (2015) and Uzodinma et al. (2018) who observed that professional assessment training programmes are required to equip teachers with requisite assessment skills for improvement in child development and learning. Thus, the findings suggest that primary school teachers need special training on children’s development and learning assessment techniques in all the domains namely, cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains.

IV. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The findings revealed that assessment of children’s learning and development have not been done in the areas of creativity, motor and affective skills. Hence, some children might have developmental impairment which could have been addressed at the elementary stage. The implication is that an all-rounded developmental assessment programme is required for the mental, physical, social and attitudinal development of children. To achieve this, there is urgent need to engage primary school teachers in professional assessment training programmes on how to assess learners’ development and learning in all the domains namely, cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of learning.

V. CONCLUSION

The discoveries from the investigation recognized that educators ought to evaluate the improvement and learning of the youngsters during instructing. The 21st century youngster is conceived and supported, in a rich domain of evaluation. The effect of evaluation of the youngsters in all zones necessitates that educators ought to be prepared with the vital preparing needs so as to survey kids. Thusly, small kids should be evaluated appropriately in the study hall setting and expect preparing to do that so as to support quality early youth training.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Primary school teachers should not just be teachers but should be professional childhood educators to ensure proper teaching and assessment of all the domains of children's development.
2. Government in collaboration with State Ministry of Education should organize regular trainings workshops and conferences for primary school teachers on how to effectively assess children's all-rounded development specifically in the cognitive, motor skills and affective domains of children's learning.
3. Government should provide instructional materials and other school facilities such as modern toilet facilities, adequate water supply, game equipment, etc., in order to create a safe and enabling environment for the development and learning at childhood education level.
4. A tolerable learning environment for the Nigerian child will no doubt engender effective teaching and learning, thereby allowing a child's to develop their fullest potential at the foundation levels of education.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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