

EDUBYTE 14 2020, CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

Skillful assessment in the classroom improves the quality of learning and teaching. Assessment can take a variety of forms.



Assessment *of* Learning (Summative Assessment)

This form of assessment is used most often and refers to a wide range of assessments which are usually given after a lesson or task has been completed to a specific group of learners. Most educators use this form of assessment to gather information about an individual learner's performance at a specific point in time. This assessment is often diagnostic and preset for teachers to administer.

Assessment *for* Learning (Formative Assessment)

This typically happens in the classroom. This type of assessment is much more informative and can reveal important insight for the educator. Together, the learner and educator *continuously* assess progress and performance. This offers the educator insights which allow him to provide targeted support to the learner, as opposed to only judging a learner's performance. The educator gains a diagnosis of how the learner is progressing, and can respond by changing the way the learner is taught and assessed.

When assessing learners, it is important to use a variety of assessment strategies. Each one needs to be chosen carefully by the teacher based on the needs of the learner.

Assessment <i>for</i> learning	Assessment <i>of</i> learning
It is a continuous process and offers insight into a learning journey.	It only shows where the learner's ability at a specific point in time.
It is used regularly and provides consistent feedback.	The information is used by those who are not directly involved in daily learning and teaching such as HOD's, Principals and the Department of Education
Information is used in informal and formal reports.	Presented as a mark in a formal report.
Focusses on improvement based on an individual's achievement.	Compares learner's performance with other students.
The learner is involved.	Does not always involve the learner.

Adapted from Ruth Sutton (2001)

Examples of Assessment for learning strategies

1. **Assessment must happen all the time** in the classroom. Educators should monitor students regularly while they are working on a task, and make deductions about their level of understanding and ability. Instructions and explanations can then be changed before the learners complete the task. Think of assessment not as something that is static and once off, but something that is continuous and happens all the time, something that can be adapted and changed. But this form of assessment is time consuming. It takes planning and careful thinking about it to get it right.
2. **Learners need to be taught how to use questioning techniques** to understand their level of performance. Learners need to be encouraged to be honest and not fear any judgement while doing this. If this is done regularly the learners will become more comfortable and self-aware. Questions that the learners ask themselves can include:
 - Which part of the task did I find easy?
 - Which part of the task did I find challenging?
 - Which part of the task do I need help with?
3. **Educators must provide regular feedback to learners.** This can take the form of oral and written feedback. Marked work needs to not only assess the performance of the learner but also give practical ways for the learner to improve. This will also help the learner see if their self-assessment of their performance is accurate. See the EduByte [Marking to Narrow the Gap](#) for more.
4. Teachers need to **provide examples of the standard of work** they expect so that the learners are able to fully understand what they are working towards. This should happen after every task.
5. Educators should also provide opportunities for learners to conduct **peer assessment**. If this is done well it can improve understanding of a task and provide support for each other. This form of assessment needs to be well planned and structured. The planning process can include the following steps:
 - Have clear assessment criteria that the learners understand.
 - Develop criteria in consultation with the learners in the class.
 - Vary the types of work the learners assess.
 - Model the responses to make sure that learners understand the type of feedback expected.
 - Allow a reasonable amount of time for learners to respond.
 - After the process has been completed the educator must provide feedback to ensure that each time the learners assess their peers they become better at it.
6. Some learners come from challenging home circumstances or have experienced trauma. The **bio-ecological approach** requires the educator to take several things into consideration when assessing a learner. The role played by the family, the school, the peer group and the community all play a significant role in a learner's academic achievement therefore acknowledging this will help the educator make fair and accurate judgements and provide the correct form of support.

7. **Identify the strengths and assets of each learner, and work with those.** Although educators can easily identify weaknesses in learners so too should they identify strengths and assets. In this process children are made aware of their natural strengths which builds confidence. Educators can then find ways to enhance these strengths. In doing this, educators need to ensure that accommodation is used during assessment where learners are also given an opportunity to show what they know. This is a wonderful way to develop self-esteem in learners who find conventional forms of assessment challenging. This form of assessment allows for every learner to achieve in some way.

Critical questions

Before an educator embarks on any form of assessment, she should think about how she will give a learner an opportunity to achieve. This can only be done if she invests time in getting to know learners.

The teacher needs to find out:

- What factors influence the child's current situation?
- How best can the learner be supported?
- How can they be helped to do better?

The educators need to also identify such things as:

- The learning style of the child.
- The ability and relevant skills that the child possesses.
- Individual strengths that the child can use effectively when performing assessment tasks.

Although it is appropriate to use assessment of learning and assessment for learning the educator needs to determine the value and limitations of each form of assessment and when each should be used.

This is an open source educational resource drafted by Social Innovations mentor Roger McIver. It draws from the sources listed below. For more EduBytes visit www.socialinnovations.co.za

Bouwer, C. (2011). Identification and Assessment of Barriers to Learning. In E.Landsberg, D. Kruger and E. Swart (Eds). Addressing Barriers to Learning: A South African Perspective (pg. 59-69). Pretoria. Van Schaik

Poener, E. & Lantolf, J. (2005) Dynamic Assessment in the language classroom. Language Teaching Research. 9, pg. 233-265

Shepard, L.(2000). The role of assessment in learning culture. *Educational Researcher*, 29(7), pg. 4-14.

www.teachertoolkit.com