UTILIZATION OF AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT METHOD AMONG BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to assess the level of utilization of authentic assessment as personal method among basic education teachers and to determine whether their level of utilization of authentic assessment as influenced by teacher's gender and teaching interest. The study was a survey, with questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Basic education teachers in Cross River State were sampled for the study using stratified sampling technique to select 722 teachers. Three hypotheses were tested using t-test and Pearson correlation analysis. The findings were as follows: (i) Nigerian basic education teachers sampled displayed a significant high utilization of authentic assessment method, (ii) Gender had no influence on utilization of authentic assessment and (iii) There was a significant positive relationship between teaching interest and utilization of authentic assessment. Based on the findings some important recommendations were made. It is therefore recommended that administrators of Nigerian Universal Basic Education and State governments should be bold enough to give the teaching profession its pride of place, and significantly motivate the workforce at that foundation level of our educational system, if the secondary and tertiary levels are to be effective.

INTRODUCTION

Authentic assessment method is a very important component of the school-based assessment that came with the introduction of the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria in 1999.

Prior to this introduction, with schools operated, the traditional assessment practices of the last century, which involves assessing the pupils with the sole aim of preparing them for examination (Alata, 2007; Idaka, 2008).

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This was so because, teachers were more interested in covering the syllabus and moreso, the emphasis was on achieving high mark without regard for learners understanding or ability to apply their knowledge in solving problems outside the school. Consequently, the focus was mostly on paper and pencil assessment. Furthermore, the usual practice was to concentrate on assessing the child's ability to cram and reproduce facts with very little attention giving to thinking and application skills (Idaka, 2008).

It was against this backdrop, that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy brought to the front burner, an assessment practice, often referred to as school-based assessment (SBA). This is simply an assessment practices that broadens and expands the forms, modes, means and scope of assessment in school in order to facilitate and enhance learning. SBA basically comprised two components – traditional method (e.g observation, interview and all forms of written tests) and authentic method (e.g project, journal, portfolio and concept map) but with emphasis placed on authentic assessment method, and hence this study.

Authentic assessment can be defined as asking learners to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world settings in order to measure what they know and are able to do. It is usually designed to guage learners' understanding of the lessons taught (Alaba, 2007). Of course, effective authentic assessment has the following advantages:-

i.   Provides learners feedback on how well they understand the information and on what they need to make improvement upon;

ii.   Helps teachers to better design instruction for more effective teaching;

iii.   Assessment becomes more relevant to the learners as they are involved in the development;

iv.   It provides learners the importunity to take active involvement in developing the scoring criteria, self evaluation and goal-setting; and

v.   Students do not doubt their scores since they participated in the assessment creation (Okri, Idaka & Inah, 2023. Although authentic assessment may not generally provide an easy set of score for comparing a group of learners, it however allows the teacher to better evaluate conceptual developments and problem-solving ability (National Teacher Institute) (NTI, 2006); and two concepts vividly characterized authentic assessment. These are (i) performance and (ii)

authenticity. Performance refers to a learner's active generation of a response that is observable either directly or indirectly through a permanent product. While, authenticity means that the nature of the task and context in which the assessment occurs is relevant and represents real-world problems or as it would be encountered in the work-place (Elliot, 1995, Alaba, 2007 & Idaka, 2019).

In the study, authentic assessment method of interest are:- project, portfolio, journals and concept map.

Project – Involves learners proposing their own projects or the teacher assigning projects either to individual child or a group of children. In this method of assessment, the teacher simply guide, monitor what is happening overtime and offer assistance where necessary. A good project usually requires self-assessment from the start to finish. Any type of method that displays what children know about a specific topic e.g. development of plans, art work, research proposals and multi-media presentation can be considered a project. Other examples may include measuring the amount of rainfall over a specific period of time during the rainy season, modelling of objects, presenting problem-situations and requesting children to provide solutions. Findings that children come up with can be presented in the form of multimedia presentation, role play or written report (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2000 Idaka, 2019). Interestingly, projects assist children to develop scientific attitude and skills.

Portfolio: Can be seen as a purposeful collection of children's work that reveals a child's efforts, progress and achievement in one or more areas and stored in a folder. The collectives must include student participation in selecting content, the criteria for judging merit and evidence of student's self-reflection (Idaka, 2008). The cumulative nature of portfolio requires a lot of input and responsibility on the part of the student; and a great deal of time energy and resources on the part of the teacher. According to NTI (2006), portfolio gives observable evidence of knowledge, process and attitude gained by the child in a mid-term, term or entire school year; and to keep a meaningful portfolio, teachers should be able to provide different learning activities in the class and instruct children to date each item to be stored. In order to participate in their children's assessment, parents should have access to the portfolios.

Journals: Offers the child opportunity to improve learning and practice of writing skills. Usually teachers ask children to respond in writing to questions in activities done in or outside the classroom. Such descriptive writing could be used by children to identify things, make a chart or give an opinion (Asebiomo, 2007; Idaka, 2008).

Concept Maps – Is a schematic device for representing a set of concept meanings in a framework of proportions. The proportions are used to link the concepts and the map represents a summary of the child's conceptual understanding (Meres & Fraser, 2004). By reducing concepts taught in class into maps children understand better and may not need to cram during examination and are more likely to recall such concept in the future.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that the importance of authentic assessment method has been well documented in the literature, it has been treated with disdain and abused by many teachers (Omole, 2007; Onuka & Adesina, 2007; Idaka, Asim & Bassey, 2007; Idaka, 2009). Since then the practice of authentic assessment has attracted several studies. While some findings are spurious, others are simply interesting.

Many of these studies e.g. Ashibi (2005) and Idaka (2019) have found high utilization of authentic assessment by Basic Education teachers. Of course, these findings are testimonies to the usefulness of authentic assessment in preparing all round graduates at that level of our educational system. Other studies have found utilization of authentic assessment very low, e.g. Asim, Idaka & Bassey (2009) and Ekpoudom (2012). Commenting on the influence of sex on utilization of SBA generally, Idaka (2008), Ekpoudom (2012) and Othman, Salleh and Norani (2013) found no difference between male and female teachers. Concerning the relationship between teaching interest and utilization of authentic assessment, a strong relationship was found by Cortis (2003), Usoro (2005), Lukeman and Uwadiegwu (2012). Of course, whether, this present study would follow this pattern is one of its motivation

The purpose of this study, therefore three fold: To determine the level of utilization of authentic assessment one should use and whether such level is dependent on gender and teaching interest.

The study, then was designed to test three hypotheses:

i.   The level of utilization of authentic assessment method is not significantly high.

ii.   Male and female teachers do not differ significantly in their level of utilization of authentic assessment method.

iii.   There is no significant relationship between teaching interest and utilization of authentic assessment method.

METHODOLOGY

The study was basically a survey and questionnaire was the instrument for gathering data. Basic Education teachers from Cross River (one of the 36 states in Nigeria) were used to represent Basic Education Teachers in Nigeria. The population stood at 6636 consisting of 3143 males and 3487 females. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 722 teachers from the population.

The questionnaire was constructed by the researchers and vetted by three experts in educational research, measurement and evaluation for face and content validation. It consisted of two sections. Section A collected data on demography while Section B was divided into two parts. Part 1 contained 5 items measuring teaching interest and part 2 contained 24 items measuring the utilization of authentic assessment method. The 4-point scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree was used for the items measuring teaching interest, whereas the 4-point scale of Very Often, Often, Rare and Very Rare was used for measuring utilization of authentic assessment method. Using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate, the instrument yielded 0.70 – 0.75 because it is considered as the best reliability.

The 722 copies of the instrument were personally administered by the researchers but 715 copies were retrieved; 16 were not completely filled, leaving a total of 699 questionnaire which gave a return rate of 96.9 percent. For the analysis, the t-test statistics and Pearson Correlation were used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of probability with the help of SPSS

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS
Hypothesis 1

The utilization of authentic assessment method is not significantly high. In testing this hypothesis, the researchers reasoned that for the level of utilization to be considered significantly high, the score made on it should be significantly greater than 60.00 (which is the mid point between "often" and "Rare" ie. 2.5 multiplied by 24, which is the total number of items measuring the dependent variable. The null hypothesis is that the mean score representing Nigerian Basic Education Teachers' utilization of authentic assessment method is not significantly higher than 60.00. (H_0: $u = 60.00$; H_1: ($u > 60.00$). the hypothesis was tested with population t-test and the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: A population t-test analysis of whether Basic teachers utilization of authentic assessment method is significantly high. Reference mean = 60.00

Variables	Sample mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig
Utilization of authentic assessment method	62.08	3.07	698	14.202*	.000

* significant at .05 Alpha level

The result in Table 1 shows that the calculated t-value of 62.00 is significant at .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. In other study, the utilization of authentic assessment method by Basic Education teachers in Nigeria is significantly high.
Hypothesis 2
This shows that the male Basic Education teachers are not significantly different from their female counterparts in the utilization of authentic assessment method.
The independent variable in this hypothesis is gender, categorized into male and female, while the dependent variable is utilization of authentic assessment method. In testing this hypothesis, the independent t-test analysis was employed and the results is as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of independent t-test analysis of the difference between male and female Basic education teachers' utilization of authentic assessment method. N = 699

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t	sig
Utilization of authentic	Male	308	62.23	4.27			
					697	0.910	.363
Assessment method	Female	391	61.96	3.52			

Not significant at .05 Alpha Level.

The result in Table 2 shows the various group sizes, means and standard deviations and non-significance. The null hypothesis which states that male teacher are not significantly different from their female counterparts in the utilization of authentic assessment is retained. In other words, male and female teachers do not differ significantly in their utilization of authentic assessment method.

Hypothesis 3
Basic teachers' teaching interest does not significantly influence with their utilization of authentic assessment method.
The independent variable and dependent variable of this hypothesis are teaching interest and utilization ways authentic assessment respectively. To test the hypothesis the Pearson correlation was used and the result is as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson's correlation analysis of the relationship between teaching interest and utilization of authentic assessment method.

Variable	X	SD		Sig
Teaching interest	17.26	2.469		
			0.43*	.001
Utilization of authentic assessment method	62.08	3.867		

*significant at .05 Alpha level

The result in Table 3 shows a positive correlation between teaching interest and the utilization of authentic assessment method r(697) = 0.43, p < .001. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between teaching interest and utilization of authentic assessment method of basic education teachers is rejected. In other words, there is a moderate positive relationship between teaching interest and basic teachers utilization of authentic assessment.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
The first and major finding of this study is that basic education teachers sampled have shown a significantly high utilization of authentic assessment method. This affirms that Nigerian Basic Education teachers like their counterparts elsewhere appreciate the advantages of using this method of assessment. The finding tends to agree with those of Ashibi (2005), Idaka (2019) cited earlier in this study.
The next finding of this study is that basic education teachers' gender has no significant influence on utilization of authentic assessment method. This finding is in agreement with Salleh and Navani (2013), Idaka (2008) and Ekpoudom (2012) who all report no significant difference between male and female teachers in their utilization of authentic assessment method.

This finding is not surprising, for having gone through the same professional training as trained teachers both males and females should be predisposed equally to the utilization of authentic assessment.
The next finding of this study is that there is a significant positive relationship between teaching interest and utilization of authentic assessment method of basic education teachers. It is quite informative, interesting and encouraging as it is only teachers with interest in teaching that can work for the success of the pupils in their care, their profession, personal and environmental differences notwithstanding.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
From the findings, it can be concluded that Nigerian Basic education teachers are not different from their counterparts in other parts of the developed world where authentic assessment, particularly at that level is gaining popularity. It is therefore recommended that administrators of Nigerian Universal Basic Education and State governments should be bold enough to give the teaching profession its pride of place, and significantly motivate the workforce at that foundation level of our educational system, if the secondary and tertiary levels are to be effective.

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