

# Basic School Teachers' Classroom Assessment: Forms Of Task Used To Assess Students' Learning

Jephtar Adu-Mensah

Department of Education and Psychology,  
University of Cape Coast, Ghana

*Abstract: Ghanaian teachers, like teachers everywhere have the responsibility of assessing students' learning. For this reason teachers are expected to be knowledgeable on issues relating to classroom assessment. This study explores the forms of task and combination of tasks that teachers used to assess student learning. An exploratory survey design was employed for the study. A total number of 278 basic school teachers were used for the study. Frequencies and percentages were used as the statistical technique to help describe the data obtained. The study revealed that teachers used multiple forms of task to assess student learning. Also, the study findings suggest that homework and project as a form of task were not appreciably used by teachers. It was recommended that Ghana Educational Service together with head teachers and circuit supervisors through constant and efficient supervision should ensure that teachers adhere to assessment practices as speculated in the SBA.*

*Keywords: Classroom assessment, basic school teachers, project.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Classroom assessment is seen as an integral component for effective teaching and learning. It is important because, it enable teachers to amass relevant educational information about students' progress as well as the extent to which methods of instruction used are helping students to achieve the intended learning outcome (Popham, 2008). Classroom assessment provides relevant feedback on students' progress over speculated period of time so that, errors or learning difficulties can be identified and corrected (Ndalichako, 2015). On the other hand, feedback provided through assessment alert students on areas that they need to work hard so as to attain the desirable learning outcome. From the aforementioned, classroom assessment contribute to enhancing quality of education through the making of appropriate and relevant educational decisions.

The process of assessing students' learning requires special knowledge and know-how skills on the part of the assessor. According to Ndalichako (2005), determining what to assess and how to assess effectively and establishing remedial measures required, is a complex process. Studies

have shown that there are many problems associated with teachers' classroom assessment practices. These include teachers' lack of an adequate knowledge base regarding the basic testing and measurement concepts (Stiggins & Chappuis 2005). Also, Campbell and Evans (2000) asserted that teachers fail to employ and adhere to measurement guidelines they learned in measurement courses. It could be some forms of task are complex for teachers to assess (Herrera, Murry & Cabral, 2007).

Since a significant amount of teachers' professional time is devoted to classroom assessment related activities (Mertler, 2003), the nature of task used to assess students learning might influence the approach to learning that students adopt (Ramsden, 1988). As such, it seems reasonable to argue that careful consideration of teachers' classroom assessment skills should not be overlooked. Boud and Falchikov (2005) suggest that teachers need to move from traditional (paper and pencil) assessment that focuses on specifics, standards and immediate outcomes to more sustainable assessment that can aid students to become more active learners not only in managing their own learning but also assessing themselves to life beyond the end of the course. In other words, teachers are expected to rely

on a set of strategies to discover what students know or can do (Knowles & Brown, 2000). Pellegrino, Chudowsky and Glaser (2001) assert that assessments should provide multiple paths to the demonstration of learning. As the use of different assessment strategies help to identify misconceptions among students (Mussawy, 2009).

In an attempt to guide the professional preparation of teachers in classroom assessment activities, the School Based Assessment (SBA) clearly speculate how teachers go about their assessment practices. The SBA emphasised the form of tasks as well as the number of each task that teachers are to give within an academic term.

The SBA invariably takes on the characteristics of continuous assessment. Continuous assessment involves an assessment process that is undertaken over a time period and may involve a single task or a number of distinct or related tasks (Williamson, 2017). A combination of tasks is used under the SBA to assess student's learning. Hence, performance of students can be better assessed if the assessment is made on different test modes such as class tests, class exercises, homework, projects and other practical activities. The SBA consists of class test, class exercises and projects. The justification for the exclusion of homework from the SBA programme is that, it is not certain whether homework will be carried out for the student by an adult. Homework is relevant in the instructional system and teachers must therefore give homework as part of the instructional process. Homework will however, not be scored as part of the SBA. The SBA is very critical because effective teaching decisions are based on the ability of teachers to understand their students and to match actions with accurate assessments.

Teachers adopt different forms of assessment tasks to evaluate students' learning outcomes, and they spend much of their classroom time engaged in student assessment related activities. At the basic level, teachers control classroom assessment environments by deciding how they assess their students, this include the form of task to use, the frequency of the assessments, and how they give students feedback. All these are indicators that classroom assessments play an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Just like teachers everywhere, Ghanaian school teachers are the key drivers of the education process. Their instructional and classroom assessment practices are a means by which education objectives are achieved (Nenty, Adedoyin, Odili, & Major, 2007). For this reason, it is imperative to explore the forms of task teachers used to assess students' learning. In summary, this study was guided by two research questions.

- ✓ What type of assessment tasks do teachers use to assess students' learning?
- ✓ What combination of tasks do teachers use to assess students?

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an explorative survey research design. The choice of this design was to assist the researcher in formulating problem and hypotheses on the phenomenon of interest. Data was collected from 278 teachers at the basic level. In order to gather data from the respondents a checklist

was employed by the researcher. This was to help provide a number of possible answers from which respondents were asked to check those that apply to themselves. Respondents were visited in their respective schools, where data were collected. Data gathered from the respondents were collated and analysed with frequencies and percentages.

## III. DATA ANALYSIS: RESULTS

*Forms of assessment tasks teachers use to assess students.*  
The first question of the study concerned the forms of tasks that teachers often use to assess students. Descriptive statistics were computed and the results are shown in Table 1.

Type of task	Frequency	%
Home work	132	47.5
Class exercises	278	100
Class test	278	100
Projects	124	44.6

Table 1: Forms of Task often given to Students

The data in Table 1 reveals that all the respondents, 100% used class exercise and class test in assessing students on learning objectives. It can again be observed that 132 representing 47.5% respondents used homework in assessing students. Also, 124 representing 44.6% of respondent indicated that they use projects to assess students.

*Combination of tasks used in assessing students' learning.*  
The second research question highlights the pairing of task that teachers often used. Descriptive statistics were computed and the results are shown in Table 2.

Combination of tasks	Frequency	%
Homework, class exercises, project and class test	120	43.2
Homework, class exercises and class test	147	52.9
Project, class exercises and class test	4	1.4
Class exercises and class test	7	2.5

Table 2: Combination of Tasks Used to Assess Students

The data in Table 2 reveal that the majority, 147 representing 52.9% respondents, used homework, class exercises and class test as an assessment tasks in assessing learning or achievement. It was again observed that 120 representing 43.2% respondents used homework, class exercises, projects and class test in assessing students' learning. More so, seven representing 2.5% respondents used class exercises and class test in assessing students. From the data in Table 2, the least, four representing 1.4% respondents relied on homework, project and class test as assessment strategies for assessing learning or students' achievement.

## IV. DISCUSSION

Among the four forms of task, those that were frequently used by teachers in assessing learning objectives were class exercises and class tests. This is to say that teachers often use class exercises and class tests as the form of tasks for assessing learning. Teachers are evaluated by head teachers or circuit supervisors on assessment conducted. Teachers maybe

relying on class exercises for students to demonstrate their understanding on learning objectives right after a topic is treated or taught.

The results also suggest that homework was not frequently used by teachers in assessing learning. The less practice of this form of task could be due to the fact that homework is excluded from the SBA programme, since it is not certain whether homework will be carried out for the student by an adult. Also, it was found that projects were the least form of task that was given to students. This finding is in line with Herrera, Murry and Cabral's (2007) assertion that when tasks are given in groups in the form of projects, distinguishing an individual student's effort and the contribution he or she makes becomes complex for teachers to assess. Perhaps this might contribute to the less practice of this form of task. Also, the less practice of this form of task might be due to the increase in workload and stress that come with it especially when the class size is large. It could also be due to the fact that projects as part of the principles of the SBA, teachers are supposed to give one project in a term to their students.

With respect to the combination of tasks used in assessing student learning, it was discovered that teachers do not rely on a single form of assessment task when assessing learning. This finding agrees with the finding obtained by Knowles and Brown (2000) that teachers rely on a set of strategies to discover what students know or can do. Perhaps teachers' reliance on multiple assessment tasks might help them in measuring some important skills and learning outcomes. For example, the use of group projects in assessing students, creates an environment that engage students in collaborative activities making learning to be seen as an active construction of knowledge on the part of the learners. This finding further corroborates the assertion of Mussawy (2009) that different assessment strategies help to identify misconceptions that students have on a topic taught and helping teachers to find ways of confronting them. It also helps in assessing different level of thinking skills. Teachers may be relying on multiple tasks to recognise student's difficulties on topic treated. It could also be that teachers were using multiple tasks to encourage students to form habit of using high level thinking skills in solving problems rather than the habit of memorizing class notes which defeats the purpose of education and does not help in problem solving. It could be that teachers were using multiple tasks to assess students learning because the SBA entreats them to do so.

## V. CONCLUSION

In this study, teachers described the forms and the combination of tasks they used in assessing students' learning. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that teachers do not rely on a single form of assessment task when assessing learning. Teachers rather adopt a set of strategies to discover what students know or can do. The use of multiple forms of task will help teachers to encourage students to form habit of using high level thinking skills in solving problems rather than the habit of memorizing class notes which defeats the purpose of education and does not

help in problem solving. The results also suggest that teachers do not appreciably use project to assess students' learning. Teachers not appreciably using this form of task may hinder cooperation between the teacher and the student as well as cooperation among students. Also, it will not encourage students to explore different ideas and skills to produce something of their own.

## VI. RECOMMENDATION

For teachers not appreciably using projects as a form of task to assess student's learning, I recommend that stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service (GES) and NGOs should work hand in hand to help reduce teacher to student ratio that exist in our public basic schools. Also, it is recommended that GES together with head teacher and circuit supervisors should ensure that teachers adhere to assessment practices as speculated in the SBA which could be achieved through constant and efficient supervision.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (2005). Redesigning assessment for learning beyond higher education. In A. Brew, and C. Asmar, C. (Eds.), *Research and Development in Higher Education*, 28, 34-41.
- [2] Campbell, C., & Evans, J. A. (2000). Investigation of preservice teachers' classroom assessment practices during student teaching. *Journal of Educational Research*, 96, 350-355.
- [3] Herrera, S. G., Murry, K. G., & Cabral, R. M. (2007). *Assessment accommodations for classroom teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse student*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.
- [4] Knowles, T., & Brown, D. F. (2000). *What every Middle School teacher should know*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- [5] Mertler, C. A. (2003, October). Preservice versus in-service teachers' assessment literacy: Does classroom experience make a difference? Paper presented at the meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association, Columbus, OH.
- [6] Mussawy, S. A. (2009). *Assessment practices: Students' and teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment*. Unpublished master thesis. Amherst: University of Massachusetts.
- [7] Nenty, H. J., Adedoyin, O. O., Odili, J. N., & Major, T. E. (2007). Primary teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices as means of providing quality primary and basic education by Botswana and Nigeria. *Educational Research and Review*, 2, 74-81.
- [8] Ndalichako, J. L. (2015). Secondary school teachers' perceptions of assessment. *International Journal of Information and Educational Technology*, 5(5), 326-330.
- [9] Pelligrino, J. W., Chudowsky, N., & Glaser, R. (2001). *Knowing what students know: The science and design of educational assessment*. National Academy Press, Washington, DC.

- [10] Ramsden, P. (1988). Studying learning, improving teaching in: P. Ramsden (Ed.) Improving learning: New perspectives, pp. 13-31 London Kogan Page.
- [11] Stiggins, R., & Chappuis, S. (2005). Putting testing in to perspective: It's for learning. Principal Leadership, 6, 16-20.

- [12] Williamson, C. (2017). Teachers' role in school-based assessment as part of public examinations. US-China Education Review Board, 7(6), 301-307.

IJIRAS