

Assessment

An Integral Part of the Teaching and Learning Process

Introduction

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It involves gathering and organizing information (evidence of learning), in order to review what learners have achieved and to provide feedback on learner performance to learners and other critical stakeholders. It informs decision-making in education, and helps teachers to establish whether learners are performing according to their full potential and are making progress towards the required levels of performance (or standards), as outlined in the Assessment Standards of the National Curriculum Statement.

The professional work of teachers involves using the different types of assessment at different times for different purposes. However, the use of the different types of assessment is always linked to gathering information to strengthen the teaching and learning process:

Baseline Assessment

Baseline assessment is assessment usually used at the beginning of a phase, grade or learning experience to establish what learners already know. It assists teachers with the planning of teaching and learning activities.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is also called "assessment for learning". The purpose of this type of assessment is to improve learners' ability to learn. Formative assessment is planned so that it provides information about learners that they can use to deepen their understanding and the teacher can use to shape future learning. The information must be used by both teacher and learner in a process of reflection and self-assessment. Thus it improves teaching and learning by giving teachers direction and enables them to adapt to learners' needs.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment gives an overall picture of learners' progress at a given time, for example, at the end of a term. It usually results in judgments about learner performance and can involve high stakes for learners (e.g. National Senior Certificate).

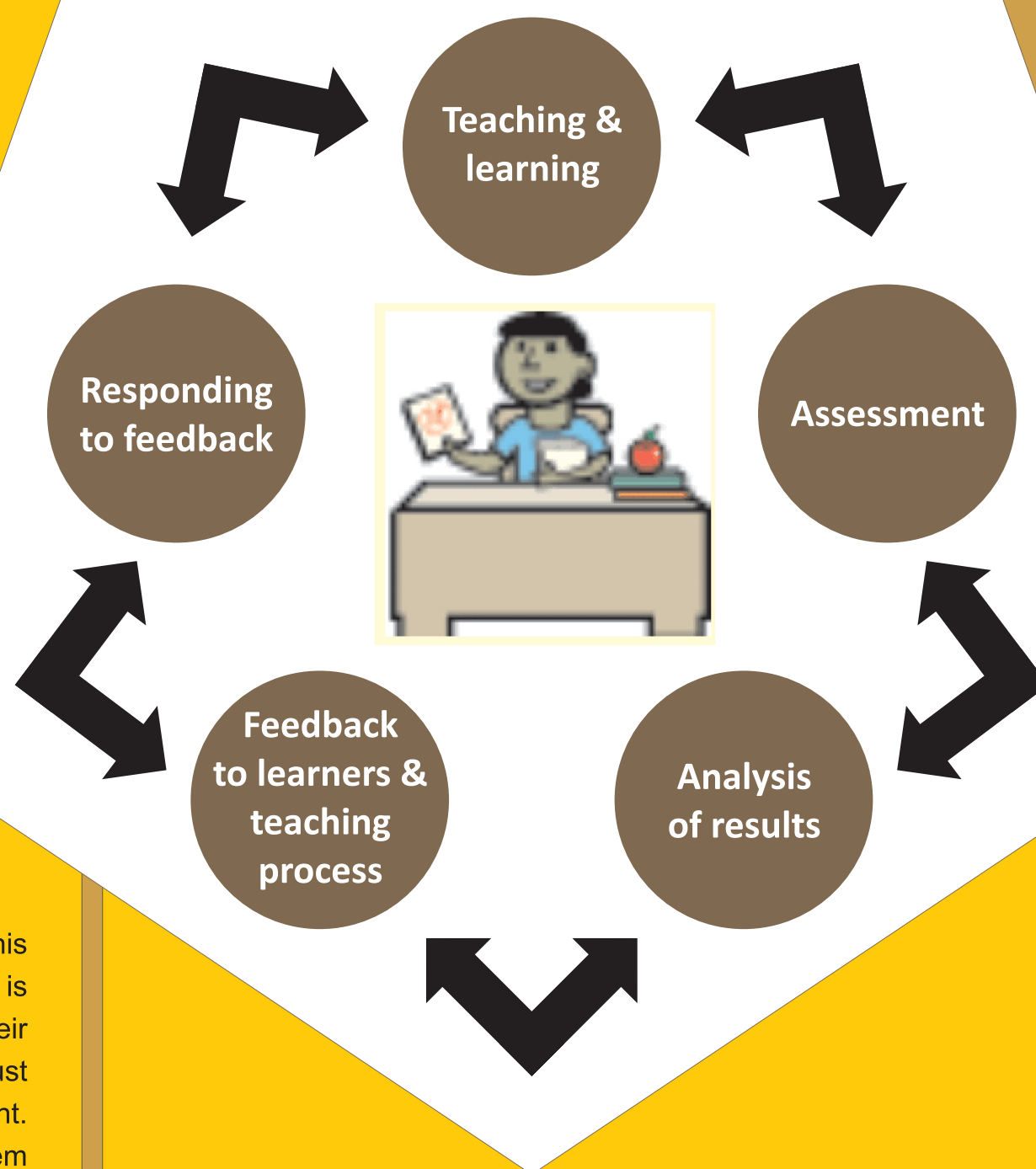
Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment is similar to formative assessment, but its application will always lead to some form of intervention or remedial action or programme. It shows up either learners' strengths and weaknesses or inappropriate teaching methodology. When it is used to find out about the nature and cause of medical barriers to learning it should be administered by specialists and then followed by expert guidance, support and intervention strategies.

Informal and Formal Assessment in the General Education and Training Band

The monitoring of learner progress or assessment occurs throughout the school year and involves two different but related activities, namely informal daily assessment and formal programme of assessment. Daily assessment tasks differ with Programme of Assessment tasks as follows:

Using assessment to monitor the process of learning



Daily Assessment Tasks	Programme of Assessment Tasks
Part of lesson planning	Part of formal Programme of Assessment
Not formally recorded	Formally recorded
Not taken into account for promotion or certification	Used for promotion or certification purposes

However, although the intention of the informal daily assessment tasks and the formal programme of assessment tasks differ, they are intertwined in the teaching and learning process: the knowledge, skills and values taught and learnt in the daily tasks form the building blocks for learner performance in formal tasks. We must also recognise that not everything that is taught should be assessed formally and not everything that is assessed need be recorded.

It is equally important that learners know what is expected of them when they are assessed. Assessment is not intended to play games with learners and to "catch them out". Learners need to know what they must learn or do for any assessment. The assessment process must be a transparent where learners are informed of criteria along with instructions for a task.

Informal: Daily assessment

The informal daily assessment tasks are the learning activities that take place in the classroom. They provide learners with opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and values required to complete the formal tasks in the Programme of Assessment. Therefore, the daily assessment tasks provide the foundation for a learner's performance in the Programme of Assessment tasks. These tasks should be reflected in the teacher's Work Schedule and lesson planning along with the formal Programme of Assessment tasks.



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Furthermore, the criteria for the Programme of Assessment tasks should be used to guide and develop learner performance and ascertain learners' progress towards optimal performance in the formal Programme of Assessment tasks. The learners' development therefore needs to be continuously measured against the criteria for the formal Programme of Assessment tasks. By knowing what the learners are expected to achieve, teachers can pinpoint learners' progress and difficulties with learning so that they can provide relevant support, both for remedial and enrichment purposes, before learners attempt the formal Programme of Assessment tasks.

The teacher does not have to mark each of the learner performances in daily assessment tasks, but can guide learners to assess their own performance or that of their peers with relevant assessment tools such as a memorandum or a checklist.

While learner progress in daily tasks does not need to be formally recorded and is not taken into account for promotion or certification purposes, it is suggested that teachers keep notes on the development of learners' knowledge, skills and values, their areas of strength and weakness and additional support required and provided during these activities. This will be of help when having to report on learner performance.

Formal: Programme of Assessment

In addition to daily assessment, teachers should develop a year-long formal Programme of Assessment for each Learning Area per grade. For all of grades R-9 the Programme of Assessment consists of internal school-based tasks undertaken during the school year.

In Grades R to 8 this constitutes all assessment tasks in a grade and makes up 100% of the Learning Area mark.

However, in Grade 9 the Programme of Assessment does not make up 100% of the Learning Area mark as it excludes the external component of assessment which constitutes 25% in Grade 9. Therefore in Grade 9 the Programme of assessment accounts for 75% and 25% respectively.

The assessment policy indicates exactly how many formal assessment tasks must be completed and recorded per Learning Area per grade in each school term. The intention of the policy is to ensure that every teacher knows exactly how much is expected in respect of formal recorded assessment. It is important to note that no one can add to the number of formal assessment tasks to be completed – not the principal, the district official nor the provincial head office official. It would require a change in our curriculum policy to change the amount of assessment that takes place.

GRADES R-3

Table 1: Number of Assessment Tasks for Grades R – 3

Learning Programme	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Total
Literacy (Languages)	4	4	4	4	16
Numeracy (Mathematics)	3	3	3	3	12
Life Skills (Life Orientation)	1	1	1	1	4

GRADES 4-6

Table 2: Number of Assessment Tasks for Grades 4 - 6

Learning Programme	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Total
Language 1	5	5	5	5	20
Language 2 & 3	4	4	4	4	16
Mathematics	3	3	3	3	12
Natural Sciences & Technology	2	3	3	2	10
Social Sciences & Arts and Culture	2	2	2	2	8
Economic and Management Sciences & Life Orientation	1	2	2	1	6

GRADES 7-9

Table 3: Number of Assessment Tasks for Grades 7 - 9

Learning Area	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	TOTAL
Language 1	5	5	5	5	20
Language 2	5	5	5	5	20
Language 3 (optional)	3	3	3	3	12
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	16
Natural Sciences	2	2	2	2	8
Social Sciences	2	2	2	2	8
Technology	1	1	1	1	4
Economic and Management Sciences	1	1	1	1	4
Life Orientation	1	1	1	1	4
Arts and Culture	1	1	1	1	4

In Grades R-9, formal Programme of Assessment tasks should give learners opportunities to research and explore the Learning Area in exciting and varied ways.

Teachers Tips

As a teacher you assess because you want to know if your learners:

- are learning what you have been teaching
- are at the right level or point of understanding to grasp the next concept
- are able to perform at the level they should
- can apply the knowledge and skills that they have learnt.

Assessment is the teacher's most valuable tool, but the assessment cycle must be completed for the true value to be extracted from the process of assessment.

- Plan assessment that reveals what you want to know
- Assess in an honest and valid manner
- Provide feedback to learners either immediately or as soon as possible
- Use the results to improve teaching and/or learning

Assessment is not intended to play games with learners and to "catch them out".

Learners need to know what they must learn or do for any assessment. If you set a project or assignment that will take learners some time to complete, it is helpful to scaffold the task. Tell them what to do at each stage of the project or assignment, indicate how long each stage should take, guide them to what they need to do. If learners are guided by the teacher, they will not have to turn to parents to do their work for them. And parents should never do assessment tasks for learners.

Assessment is about checking on your learners' learning during the teaching process in the most appropriate way at the most appropriate time, and not burdening yourself with the marking of endless tests.

Assessment is asking questions during the lesson, giving a quick test, a formal test at the end of a section or period of time, setting an assignment or a task, listening to oral work or setting and marking a piece of writing, maybe a whole essay or maybe just the introduction and conclusion. Assessment is continuous, but not continual. It is ongoing, but not endless without a break.

Article written by: Dr Jennifer J. Joshua, Director: Foundations for Learning Campaign, on behalf of the General and Education and Training Band, Department of Education.



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