

THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVISION IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract: This study examined the role of assessment in improving accountability and quality education provision. The study was guided by four research questions and four null hypotheses. Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The population of the study was 400 respondents comprising 176 lecturers of the faculty of education, school of education and school of adult and non-formal education of the two federal higher institutions of learning on one hand and 224 lecturers of the faculties of education of the two state higher institutions of learning on another hand all in Rivers State. The entire population of 400 was taken as a census for the study. A self-structured 16-items questionnaire titled "role of assessment in improving accountability and quality education provision" was used for data collection. The research instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two experts: one in the field of adult education and one in the field of measurement and evaluation. The instrument was subjected to a test of internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha method. Reliability coefficient value of 0.82 was obtained in the instrument. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and Z-Test to test hypotheses. It was found out that those saddled with the responsibility of providing education are not adequately accountable. The study also revealed that assessment will improve accountability and the provision of quality education. The paper, therefore, concludes that assessment is a necessary requirement for accountability and provision of quality education. The study therefore recommended, among other things, that government and heads of institutions of learning should provide mechanism for the assessment of the processes of teaching and learning.

Keywords: accountability, assessment, education, quality.

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Introduction

Accountability is key to the success of any endeavour. It builds trust and gives focus to any organisation or individuals. Most times it seems difficult for individuals and organisations to be accountable if there are no mechanisms to propel such accountability. However, assessment plays such role of check on organisations, groups or individuals to propel them to be accountable.

Assessment for accountability is essentially a regulatory process, designed to assure institutional conformity to specified norms. Accountability advocates, to a considerable extent, view colleges as factories and higher education as a production process (Aworanti 2015). However, various performance measures, which attempt to measure institutional effectiveness, particularly with regard to fiscal efficiency and resource productivity, need to be created and applied to institutions of learning throughout the country. Although the terms "assessment" and "accountability" are often used interchangeably, they have important differences.

In general, when we assess our own performance, it's assessment; when others assess our performance, it's accountability. That is, assessment is a set of initiatives we take to monitor the results of our actions and improve ourselves; accountability is a set of initiatives others take to monitor the results of our actions, and to penalize or reward us based on the outcomes (Falayajo, 2014)

People tend to be careful with their activities in which they are accountable to others when they know that there is a mechanism put in play to assess their activities, hence the role of assessment in improving accountability cannot be over emphasised. Accountability measures are an attempt to assert more direct public control over higher education. Ifeakor, & Anekwe (2013) stated that they are primarily concerned with resource allocation and fiscal efficiency. It is completely appropriate for those who pay the bills-taxpayers, parents, and students--to evaluate critically what they get for their money from public education. Onuekwusi & Agoha (2015), posited that assessment derives its legitimacy from the quality of its measurements; and those being measured generally best know the area being assessed.

An assessment should give teachers the information they need to help them improve the learning outcomes of their students. An assessment enables a teacher know what his students understand and can do. An assessment should support teaching and learning and it should not be used solely to measure teacher or school performance for accountability but should be used to hold other stakeholders in education accountable.

The quality of the education available to the citizens of a people has a lot to do with the quality of life of the people. By quality of life it means the level of economic progress, national development, political involvement and prowess, administrative competence and managerial skill of the people in all strata of life. Unfortunately, the quality of education is dwindling drastically. This could be connected to lack of monitoring and assessment of all that is involved in the provision of quality education: assessment of the curriculum, learning experiences, teaching methods and principles, learning outcome, learners' performance, education providers, etc.

It is therefore, pertinent to state that assessment plays vital role in the provision of quality education. Curriculum assessment includes individual student achievement, general program review,

surveys for planning purposes, or institutional-wide self-study (Marti, 2013). Marti noted that the assessment processes measure knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior and it is done to enhance teaching, learning and accountability. Martinson and Cole stated that assessment is a systematic collection and use of information on students, the education environment, and learning outcomes to improve student learning. The instrument used for assessment must be valid and accurate.

According to Martinson and Cole (2012), many State legislatures, concerned with how state educational funds are spent, have begun to evaluate their university educational system using the assessment process. Furthermore, they noted that educational assessment provides the means to determine if the goals of the program are being achieved. Educational assessment provides the means to determine if the goals of the programme are being achieved. Thus, policy makers through funding mechanisms can require educational institutions to set goals, such as graduation rates, faculty publication, faculty and student diversity, and soon, and use the assessment process to determine the institution's progress towards agreed upon goals (Imo, 2015)

Education are of different levels such as primary, secondary, tertiary and adult education. Particularly, provision of quality adult education is vital to the growth of any nation (Ihejirika, (2015). This is because the level of literacy of a nation determines how efficient managers of all sectors of such nation will be. Of course, if we have illiterate managers of the economy, politics, security, etc of a nation, such nation will remain undeveloped. Assessment of learning content, teaching methods and principles, learning outcome, learners' performance, education providers, etc is also vital to the provision of quality education (Onuka & Durowoju 2011)

Statement of the Problem

The culture of accountability is less held in high esteem. In some cases, people who are entrusted with positions of public service discharge their duties with impunity and not being accountable to anyone or institutions. However, accountability is the basis on which trust is anchored. Accountability also fosters the progress of any institution and facilitate the accurate achievement of organisational goals. On the other hand, the quality of education is gradually eroding. This could be as a result of lack of interest and less concern by policy makers and major stakeholders in the system. The quality of education provided by education providers of the modern day is contestably less compare to the olden day education. This retrogression may be connected to lack of assessment of the systems and officials/administrators of the system. The problem of this study is that assessment is lacking in the system and as a result people are less accountable in their responsibilities and the quality of education is dwindling. How can assessment improve accountability and provide quality adult education? Providing answer to this question is the focus of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the role of assessment in improving accountability and quality adult education provision. The study specifically is poised to achieve the following objectives:

1. Find out how accountable stakeholders of education are

2. Ascertain the quality of adult education available in the society
3. Examine how assessment can improve accountability
4. Examine how assessment can improve the provision of quality education

Research Question

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How accountable are the stakeholders of education?
2. What is the quality of adult education available in the society?
3. How can assessment improve accountability?
4. How can assessment improve the provision of quality education?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers in Rivers State on how accountable the stakeholders of education are
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers in Rivers State on the quality of adult education available in the society
3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers in Rivers State on how assessment can improve accountability
4. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers in Rivers State on

how assessment can improve the provision of quality education

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 400 respondents comprising 176 lecturers of the faculty of education, school of education and school of adult and non-formal education of the two federal higher institutions of learning and 224 lecturers of the faculties of education of the two state higher institutions of learning all in Rivers State. The entire population of 400 was taken as a census for the study. This is a manageable population. Data for this study was collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled "Role of Assessment in Improving Accountability and Quality Education". The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two experts: one in the field of Adult Education and another in Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument was subjected to a test of internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha. Reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained for the instrument. This showed the instrument was reliable. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researchers and retrieved personally. Mean statistics and standard deviation were used for the analysis of data in this study while Z-Test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Weighted mean response was used to determine the criterion mean. Thus, items that fell between 2.50 and above were considered as agree while those that fell below 2.50 were considered as disagree.

Results

Research Question One

How accountable are the stakeholders of education?

Table 1: Mean response of respondents on how accountable the stakeholders of education are

S/N	ITEMS	Federal Lecturers N=176		State Lecturers N=224		Remark
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	We receive regular progress report of students' performance	2.09	0.48	2.14	0.33	disagree
2	We have the financial report of our institution	2.11	0.54	2.03	0.46	Agree
3	Government promptly updates us on any policy change in education	2.45	0.53	2.34	6.05	disagree
4	Government regularly summon stakeholders meeting on education.	2.54	7.05	2.35	5.02	disagree
Grand Mean		2.41	0.53	2.38	0.43	disagree

Table 1 revealed that respondents disagree that they receive regular progress report of students' performance. They disagree that they have the financial report of our institution. They also disagree that government promptly updates them on any policy change in education. They further disagreed that government regularly summon stakeholders meeting on education. The grand mean scores of 2.41 and 2.38 representing the opinion of federal lecturers and

state lecturers respectively of the higher institutions of learning in Rivers State indicate that respondents disagreed that stakeholders on education are accountable to the people.

Research Question Two:

What is the quality of adult education available in the society?

Table 2: Mean Response of Respondents on the quality of adult education available in the society

S/N	ITEMS	Federal Lecturers N=176		State Lecturers N=224		Remark
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
5	The facilitators and operators of adult education are specialist and professionals.	2.46	0.62	2.54	0.73	Agree
6	The learning content of adult education programmes addresses the needs of the learners.	2.56	1.02	2.64	1.02	Agree
7	The curriculum of the adult education is of universal standard	2.40	0.93	2.47	0.83	disagree
8	Graduate of adult education programmes are effectively functional to themselves and to the society.	2.48	0.95	2.46	0.85	disagree
Grand Mean		2.47	0.81	2.51	0.82	Disagree

Table 2 shows disparity of respondents in some items and uniformity of agreement in some items. Respondents from federal institutions by the mean score of 2.46 disagreed that the facilitators and operators of adult education are specialist and professionals while their counterparts from the state, by the mean score of 2.54, responded otherwise. However, on the average, it is agreed that the facilitators and operators of adult education are specialist and professionals. Both respondents agreed that the learning content of adult education programmes addresses the needs of the learners.

Respondents disagreed that the curriculum of adult education is of universal standard. Respondents disagreed that graduate of adult education programmes are effectively functional to themselves and to the society. The average of the grand mean which is 2.49 indicates that respondents are of the opinion that the quality of adult education available to the society is of less quality.

Research Question Three:

How can assessment improve accountability?

Table 3: Mean Response of Respondents on How Assessment Can Improve Accountability

S/N	ITEMS	Federal Lecturers N=176		State Lecturers N=224		Remark
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
9	Assessment will make education stakeholders give periodic report of their responsibilities	2.93	1.06	2.87	1.03	Agree
10	Assessment will make stakeholders account for all financial involvement of the sectors they head	2.50	0.62	2.51	0.53	Agree
11	Assessment will make stakeholders on education intimate the public on any change in policy on education	3.06	0.89	3.02	0.94	Agree
12	Assessment will make those saddled with responsibilities to be careful of their activities in order not to be implicated.	2.85	0.97	2.90	0.84	Agree
Grand Mean		3.15	0.83	3.00	0.84	Agree

Table 3 reveals that respondents agree that assessment will make education stakeholders give periodic report of their responsibilities and account for all financial involvement of the sectors they head. It will make stakeholders on education intimate the public on any change in policy on education. Assessment, according to respondents, will also make those saddled with responsibilities to

be careful of their activities in order not to be implicated. This is implied in the grand mean response of 3.15 and 3.00 of federal and state lecturers of the higher institutions of learning in Rivers State.

Research Question Four:

How can assessment improve the provision of quality education?

Table 3: Mean Response of Respondents on How Assessment Can Improve the Provision of Quality Education

S/N	ITEMS	Federal Lecturers N=176		State Lecturers N=224		Remark
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
9	Assessment will make teachers give quality teaching to learners	2.93	1.06	2.87	1.03	Agree
10	Assessment will make students study hard for quality result	2.50	0.62	2.51	0.53	Agree
11	Assessment will make designers of learning content frame quality curriculum	3.06	0.89	3.02	0.94	Agree
12	Assessment will make heads of educational institutions monitor the processes of teaching and learning	3.15	0.97	3.00	0.84	Agree
Grand Mean		2.91	0.83	2.93	0.84	Agree

Table 4 reveals that respondents agree that assessment will make teachers give quality teaching to learners and make students study hard for quality result. Respondents also agreed that assessment will make designers of learning content frame quality curriculum and that assessment will make heads of educational institutions monitor the processes of teaching and learning. This is indicated in

the grand mean response of 2.91 and 2.93 of federal and state lecturers of the higher institutions of learning in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers in Rivers State on how accountable the stakeholders of education are

Table 5: Z-Test analysis on significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers on how accountable the stakeholders of education are.

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DF	Z-Cal.	Z-Crit.	Decision
Federal lecturers	176	2.48	0.92				
State lecturers	224	2.77	0.91	461	-3.02	±1.96	Accepted

Table 5. revealed that the Z-calculated value is -3.02 and the Z-critical table value is ±1.96 with a degree of freedom of 461 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the z-cal (-3.02) is less than the z-critical table value, the null hypothesis was accepted indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal

lecturers and state lecturers in Rivers State on how accountable the stakeholders of education are

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers in Rivers State on the quality of adult education available in the society

Table 6: Z-Test analysis on significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers on the quality of adult education available in the society

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DF	Z-Cal.	Z-Crit.	Decision
Federal lecturers	176	2.85	0.86				
State lecturers	224	2.78	0.79	461	0.80	±1.96	Accepted

Table 6 revealed that the Z-calculated value is 0.80 and the Z-critical table value is ±1.96 with a degree of freedom of 461 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the z-cal (0.80) is less than the z-critical table value, the null hypothesis was accepted indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal

lecturers and state lecturers on the quality of adult education available in the society

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers in Rivers State on how assessment can improve accountability

Table 7: Z-Test analysis on significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers on how assessment can improve accountability

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	Z-Cal.	Z-Crit.	Decision
Federal lecturers	176	2.61	0.77	461	-0.12	±1.96	Accepted
State lecturers	224	2.62	0.77				

Table 7 revealed that the Z-calculated value is -0.12 and the Z-critical table value is ±1.96 with a degree of freedom of 461 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the z-cal (-0.12) is less than the z-critical table value, the null hypothesis was accepted indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal

lecturers and state lecturers on how assessment can improve accountability

Ho₄: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers in Rivers State on how assessment can improve the provision of quality education

Table 8: Z-Test analysis on significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers on how assessment can improve the provision of quality education

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	Z-Cal.	Z-Crit.	Decision
Federal lecturers	176	2.85	0.86	461	0.82	±1.96	Accepted
State lecturers	224	2.78	0.79				

Table 8 revealed that the Z-calculated value is 0.82 and the Z-critical table value is ±1.96 with a degree of freedom of 461 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the z-cal (0.82) is less than the z-critical table value, the null hypothesis was accepted indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal lecturers and state lecturers on how assessment can improve the provision of quality education

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study in research question one reveals that majority of respondents disagreed that stakeholders of education are accountable with their responsibilities. From their responses, there are no regular progress report of students' performance, no financial report and promptly updates on any policy change in education. The mean scores of respondents to the questionnaire items are below the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that lecturers in both federal and state higher institutions of learning in Rivers State disagreed that stakeholders on education are accountable to the people. Inline with this, Onuekwusi & Agoha (2015) opined that it is completely appropriate for those who pay the bills-taxpayers, parents, and students to evaluate critically what they get for their money from public education.

The findings of the study in research question two shows disparity in opinion between the federal and state lecturers in some items. Although respondents agreed that the learning content of adult education programmes addresses the needs of the learners, they disagreed that the curriculum of adult education is of universal standard. Their responses also show that graduate of adult education programmes are not effectively functional to themselves and to the society. In the overall analysis, respondents disagreed that the society has the require quality adult education. This is implied in the average of grand means of 2.47 and 2.51 respectively which is 2.49, below the criterion mean. This is in line with the position of Ihejirika (2015) that provision of quality adult education is vital to the growth of any nation.

The findings in research question three reveals that majority of lecturers in both federal and state institutions of higher learning in Rivers State agree that assessment can improve accountability. This is because, according to their responses, assessment will make education stakeholders give periodic report of their responsibilities and account for all financial involvement of the sectors they head. It will make stakeholders on education intimate the public on any change in policy on education. Assessment, according to respondents, will also make those saddled with responsibilities to be careful of their activities in order not to be implicated. This is implied in their grand mean responses of 3.15 and 3.00 respectively. Accountability measures are an attempt to assert more direct public control over higher education (Ifeakor, & Anekwe 2013)

It is found out in research question four that respondents agree that assessment will make teachers give quality teaching to learners and make students study hard for quality result. Respondents also agreed that assessment will make designers of learning content frame quality curriculum and that assessment will make heads of educational institutions monitor the processes of teaching and learning. This is indicated in the grand mean response of 2.91 and 2.93 of federal and state lecturers of the higher institutions of learning in Rivers State. This therefore implies that assessment can improve the provision of quality education. This could be the reason Onuka & Durowoju (2011) posited that assessment of learning content, teaching methods and principles, learning outcome, learners' performance, education providers, etc is also vital to the provision of quality education.

Conclusion

Following the findings of this study, it was concluded that stakeholders on education are not accountable as a result of non-assessment of their responsibilities. The adult education available to the society is not up to global standard even though the learning content meets the need of the learners. Assessment can improve

accountability as it will keep every stakeholder on their toes to do the needful. Finally, the study concludes that assessment can improve the provision of quality of education

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it was therefore recommended that:

1. Everyone saddled with the responsibility of providing public service should be made to give regular account to discourage impunity
2. Heads of institution of learning should set up mechanism to improve the quality of adult education and other forms of education
3. Government should set up mechanism for assessment for the purpose of accountability for all involved in the provision of education
4. There should be accountability in order to improve provision of quality education to the society

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