# QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTROL IN LEARNING ASSESSMENTS: PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN NIGERIA EDUCATION

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## Abstract

Quality assurance and control in learning is an important component in maintaining standards and excellence in Nigeria educational systems and it cannot be compromised. Any attempt to compromise will automatically distort and alter the intended results predesigned for setting up our educational institutions of learning.  It is a watchdog, and must be effective and very functional in the educational systems. Quality assurance and control ensures the credibility and reliability of learning assessment in the educational system. Through these mechanisms, teachers, instructors and the entire school systems are able to establish and maintain standards of excellence in teaching and learning. This paper therefore makes bare the scope and relevance of quality assurance and control in the educational system, forms of assessments and assessment models in content delivery. Some of the suggestions raised amongst others are; Learning should be aimed to achieve intended outcomes and standardized criteria should be deployed during assessment for learning, the information gathered through assessment should be applied during learning evaluation by the assessors, while other stakeholders should be encouraged to partake in quality assurance  and control processes  so as to  acquire the desired skills and competency for carrying out effective assessment for learning towards  the actualization of standards in  the educational systems..

 **Keywords: Quality Assurance, Quality Control, Learning Assessment, Excellence in Education**

## Introduction

One of the most reliable and important mechanism for the maintenance of standards and excellence is the deployment of quality assurance and quality control practices, whether, it in the educational sector, industry or in any other establishment. Quality assurance and control are important components in assessing learning outcomes in Nigerian education system. These mechanisms ensure that the school system strictly follows established standards and procedures, leading to the delivery

of high-quality knowledge and idea transfer. They help in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching methods, curriculum design, and assessment practices. Quality assurance and control ensures the credibility and reliability of learning assessment in the Nigerian education system. Through these mechanisms, school systems are able to establish and maintain standards of excellence in teaching and learning. They provide a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of assessment practices, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing required changes to enhance the overall quality of learning assessment (Okeke, 2015). In addition, quality assurance and control measures help in ensuring fairness, consistency, and transparency in the assessment process. This ensures that all students are evaluated on an equal footing and that their achievements accurately reflect their knowledge and skills. By implementing quality assurance and control measures in learning assessment, the Nigerian education system aims to provide students with a robust and reliable evaluation of their knowledge and skills, ultimately preparing them for their future academic and professional pursuits.

Okoli and Okoli. (2021) defined quality assurance as deliberate, evidence - based strategies and processes of satisfying quality expectations based on the processes, environment and products. Mogbeyiteren et al. (2019) opined that quality assurance is often used interchangeably with quality control to refer to ways of ensuring the quality of service.  And that it is a wider concept that covers all policies and systematic activities implemented within a quality system. Quality assurance entails a systematic process that ensures effective management of resource inputs, refinement of processes, and the elevation of output standards to achieve predetermined goals and fulfill public accountability. It encompasses control, accountability, and improvement. Accountability involves meeting stakeholder preferences, while control extends beyond managing resource expenditures to demonstrate how high quality can be achieved with existing resources. Improvement involves acquiring essential inputs, refining processes, and enhancing output standards to meet established objectives. Quality assurance is a process-driven approach that establishes and defines goals for a specific product. The term 'quality assurance' is used across various sectors and in different contexts, often meaning different things to different groups of people.  It is used as a watchdog, utilized to ensure that the desired outcome at every stage of instructional delivery is actualized. It stands to reflect its effort during students assessment because the outcome of the assessment shows the efficacy of the quality assurance mechanisms deployed and also show evidence of student learning achievement However, for the purpose of this paper, 'quality assurance' will be specifically focused on learning assessment

**Quality Assurance and Control in Learning Assessment**
Quality assurance in learning assessment refers to a systematic and ongoing process designed to ensure that assessment practices and procedures meet established standards of excellence. It involves the implementation of measures to guarantee the accuracy, fairness, and effectiveness of assessments in an educational context. The primary goal of quality assurance in learning assessment is to enhance the reliability and validity of assessments while promoting fairness and equity for all students. This encompasses the development of clear assessment criteria, the use of appropriate assessment methods, training and standardization of assessors, and continuous monitoring and improvement of

assessment practices to maintain high standards and contribute to meaningful and reliable evaluations of student learning. Kifordu and Igweh (2021) identified a precipitous fall in the standard and quality of tertiary institution graduates in Nigeria due to examination maladministration, high rate of student explosion, overstretched facility, space, time and invigilation among others.

The second concept deployed to ensure learning standards is the quality control mechanism which refers to the internal verification procedure either formal or informal used by educational institutions in order to monitor quality and standards of pupils or learners learning experiences as intended. Hence, quality assurance and control in learning assessment involves ensuring that the assessments used in educational settings are fair, valid, reliable, and useful. It is important for promoting excellence in education because it helps to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process, identify areas for improvement, and maintain high standards of education and one of these assessment procedures is the Assessment for Learning (AFL).

The AFL is a tool used to determine what learners know and their achievement. It is used to guide the learning process, assess, inform and make useful decisions it is a process that involves evaluation of course or subject contents .At the course level, assessment for learning provides important data on the breadth and depth of student learning.  It is more than grading; it extends to measuring learner's progress. Assessing students' learning progress is critical to sustaining motivation in learning and helping them approach learning with high confidence and more clarity having known the importance of assessment for learning in education, it is therefore pertinent that instructors and teachers set up the evaluation methods to assess learners grades, motivation and other components of the learning process. Below are some guiding questions when doing AFL;

1. What kinds of content knowledge am I expecting students to demonstrate and at what level?
2. What aspects of thinking do I want students to develop in my course and demonstrate through course assessments?
3. Are there professional skills or attitudes that I expect students to develop in my course?

**Statement of Problem**

Education is the hallmark of any country including Nigeria The emphasis on paper qualification in the Nigerian education system has given rise to the quest for educational certificates and degrees. The education system  has lways had some kinds of checks and balances which are put in place to keep track of quality or standards in education institution and systems, and to try to improve them. However, these measures have recently being recognized as quality assurance. In some ways quality assurance in education can be seen as building on the traditional checks and balances in the systems (Allais 2009) in other words quality assurance is something rather different and new to education. Some of the existing traditional ways of monitoring and improving quality in education includes external examination for example General Certificate for Education (GCE), Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) and Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) etc. and inspection from inspectorate division of the Ministry of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) with these measures in place to monitor and manage quality assurance, one begins to wonder why quality assurance has become a challenge or an issue. Thus this paper seeks to

examines the extent to which there have been changes in these practices and policies to bring about educational quality in assessment for learning.

## Aim of paper

The aim of this paper is to advocate for the promotion of  excellence and standards  in Nigeria Education through quality assurance and control mechanisms in learning assessment. Basically, the following areas are of utmost concern:

i.     Assessment as key in educational system
ii.    Teachers' skillfulness in assessment design and implementation
iii.   Assessment of learning outcomes as a quality assurance measure for promoting excellence in Nigeria educational system
iv.    Quality control and assurance mechanism in Content Delivery

## What is Assessment in Education?

There are many scholarly definitions of assessment across the globe but   few authors shall be used within this paper. Assessment in its forms has always been seen as a focal and central point of educational practice. There are evidences from the empirical literatures that suggest that assessments have effect on how teachers teach and consequently how students learn. (Ekua 2016). Assessment in education or educational evaluation is a planned and organized method of documenting and using media data on the knowledge, skill, attitudes, aptitude and beliefs to refine programs and improve students learning (Wikipedia 2023). Assessment is about learning. It is intended to find out and report on what has been learnt thus regarded as an integral to teaching and learning activities in school and mediates the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom (Biggs, 2003 cited in Ekua 2016). Brown (2014) defined assessment as a related series of measures used to determine a complex attribute of an individual or group of individuals.

This involves gathering and interpreting information about the students' level of attainment of learning goals. Fenton, (1996) as cited in Davies (2000) further opines that assessment is the collection of relevant information that may be relied on for making decisions. In another definition, Biggs, cited in Ekua 2016 stated that assessment is all the activities that teachers and students engage in to get information that can be used to alter teaching and learning. These activities include teacher observation and analysis of students' work like homework, tests, essays, reports, practical procedures and classroom discussion of issues. All these are concerned with sampling what a student may or may not know. It can also be used for selecting, controlling or motivating students, and to satisfy public expectations as to standards and accountability. Assessment is also a process by which information is obtained relative to some known objective or goal. Assess is a broad term that includes testing. A test is a special form of assessment. Tests are assessments made under contrived circumstances, especially so that they may be administered. In order words, all tests are assessments, but not all assessments are tests. We test at the end of a lesson or unit. We assess progress at the end of a school year through tests. So, Assessment is the systematic gathering and analyzing of

information, to inform and improve student learning or programs of student learning in light of goal-oriented expectations (prof. NNV 2012). Having looked at the different definitions, we therefore say that assessment is theprocess of collecting data and learning information that reflects all the performance of the learners and the learning system based on a set of standards in order to make more profound judgments that will change and enhance learning.

### Why do we conduct Assessment?

The main purpose of assessment is to help identify learning gaps in students and what corrective activities should be appropriate to reduce them so that students can continue or improve their learning. We assess the students' performance to find out if students can apply what they have learnt in real life or authentic situations we also assess to improve, inform and prove that learning has taken place. We assess learning and we evaluate results in terms of some set of criteria. These three terms are connected, but will be useful to think of them as separate but connected ideas and processes.
Each of these purposes requires a different role, teachers, different planning, and raises different quality issues. There are different types of assessment in learning, assessment of learning, assessment for learning and assessment as learning.

a.  Assessment as learning: This can be used in conjunction to support learners' achievement; it is used for the purpose of greater learning achievement. It is also a process of developing and supporting learners "active participation and is used for the purpose of providing evidence of achievement for reporting.

b.  Assessment for learning: This is an integral part of teaching and learning. It is better described as a process where assessment information is used by teachers to adjust their teaching strategies and students use it to adjust their learning strategies. It continuously improves instructions and supports learners in taking control of their own education. (National Standard fact sheet).

c.  Assessment of learning: This can be referred to as a set of plans formulated to ascertain what learners know, and show if they have met the curriculum goals of their various courses, make decisions about learners' placements. It is formulated to show evidence of performance to learners, parents, and educators to all levels publicly and helps to make statements on how well learners are learning.

Assessment drives learning, that is we have to organize our assessment diligently, in such a way that our learners will learn what we want them to learn. For example, if we want our medical students to learn how to manage patients, our exam questions must be patient case studies in which students are asked what their management will be. The main reason students are assessed, is that we want to see if they have learnt what we have taught them. This kind of assessment which is done at the end of a period of teaching is called summative; it is a "summary" of what the students have learnt. Assessment is of great value to our students because it shows them where they have made mistakes. Educators should make it a point to always discuss and give back the students' scripts in order the show them the right answers where they made mistakes as soon as exams are taken. Assessments carried out this way, while students are still learning is called formative. We are still forming and

improving" the students hence assessment should be valid; this means it should test what it is supposed to test. It should also be reliable that is if we repeat the assessment on the same students at another time, or use another examiner and find the score to be the same.

The difference between assessment and evaluation as posited by Prof. NNU 2012 in the table below.

| Assessment | Evaluation |
|---|---|
| **Assessment is the gathering of information about something such as student performance** | **Evaluation is the act of setting a value on the assessment information.** |
| **Assessment is qualitative** | **Evaluation is quantitative** |
| **Assessment pinpoints specific strengths and weakness** | **Evaluation ranks and sorts individuals within groups** |
| **Assessment is diagnostic and formative as well as summative** | **Evaluation is only summative.** |

It is important to assess in order to
   a. To find out what the learners know (knowledge)
   b. To find out what the learners can do and how well they can do it (skill, performance)
   c. To find out how learners go about the task of doing their work (process).
   d. To find out how students feel about their work (motivation, effort)

We can assess the learners through observing the learners day by day, rating scales, tests and quizzes, project work, rubrics and portfolios.

**Forms of Assessment**

There are multiple forms of assessment one can use to identify knowledge and skills and where they can improve. Some of them as reviewed by Avellino (2022) include:

1. Practical assessment: this is a group of practical activities that are meant to assess and observe the practical skills and behaviour of employees, that helps to ensure qualify and job performance of the workers.

2. Diagnostic assessment: this helps to check learners' current knowledge base.

3. Formative assessment: This is an assessment used during learning session to capture a learner's progress in real – time it can be in combination with formal and informal quizzes, point exercises and short essays. The primary goal of this form of assessment is to identify how learners are improving as they learn and at the same time pick out any knowledge gaps or proficiency levels that they have not achieved yet. This will enable teachers to modify and adjust their teaching strategies to achieve high impact learning.

4. Summative assessment: This serves as a summary test provided at the end of the learning or training activity. This helps teachers to define how much a learner has learnt and improved over time and record their overall achievement.

5. Skill assessment: this helps to measure a person's ability to accomplish specific tasks. It is usually administered by professionals who identify whether one is qualified in a specific occupation.

6. Gamified assessment: It is a type of assessment strategy that uses various gamification elements to evaluate and gather specific information from candidates or employees' opinions on a certain topic or skill level.

7. Oral assessment: it is a popular formal type of assessment that evaluates candidates or employees orally.

8. Ipsative assessment: This is a practice of retaking an assessment and comparing the results of the previous performance. It builds on the idea that learning is a process, and there's still room for improvement for those who have achieved a lower mark on the first attempt.  It places emphasis on individual and individual development.

9. Norm-referenced assessment: This type of assessment significantly compares a learner's knowledge and performance to another. This comparison class is called the "norming group" which is people within the same age, education, and job position. Etc.

10. Criterion-referenced assessment: These measures a learner's learning progress or performance based on predetermined and agreed-upon criteria and standards it does not compare groups.

11. Scenario-based assessment: This involves a hypothetical scenario where learners are expected to apply their theoretical knowledge. Using these methods teachers will be able to see firsthand the level of expertise of their learners.

12. Behavioral assessment: This is a psychological assessment that aims to assess a person's behaviour. Individuals are observed in their workplace or environment. How they respond to each situation will show you whether or not they're fit for the role.

## Quality Assurance and Control mechanism in Content Delivery

Effective assessment for learning begins with the teachers, that is to say, the teacher or instructor should able to state the learning outcomes in simple terms, which shall comprise the three domains of learning (Cognitive, affective and psychomotor). This will ensure  learners motivation and successful learning all through the learning process.  Below are some examples of some models prescribed for achieving standards in course and content delivery:

1. The RISE MODEL (Reflect, Inquire, Suggest and Elevate). This Model was created by Emily Wray in 2013.  It is a feedback quality assurance mechanism used to enhance peer-to- peer and instructor feedback during learning interaction.  The RISE model is a formative assessment strategy used to provide immediate and ongoing feedback to motivate and improve student learning. It provides information on the gap between the actual level and the supposed level of the learners.
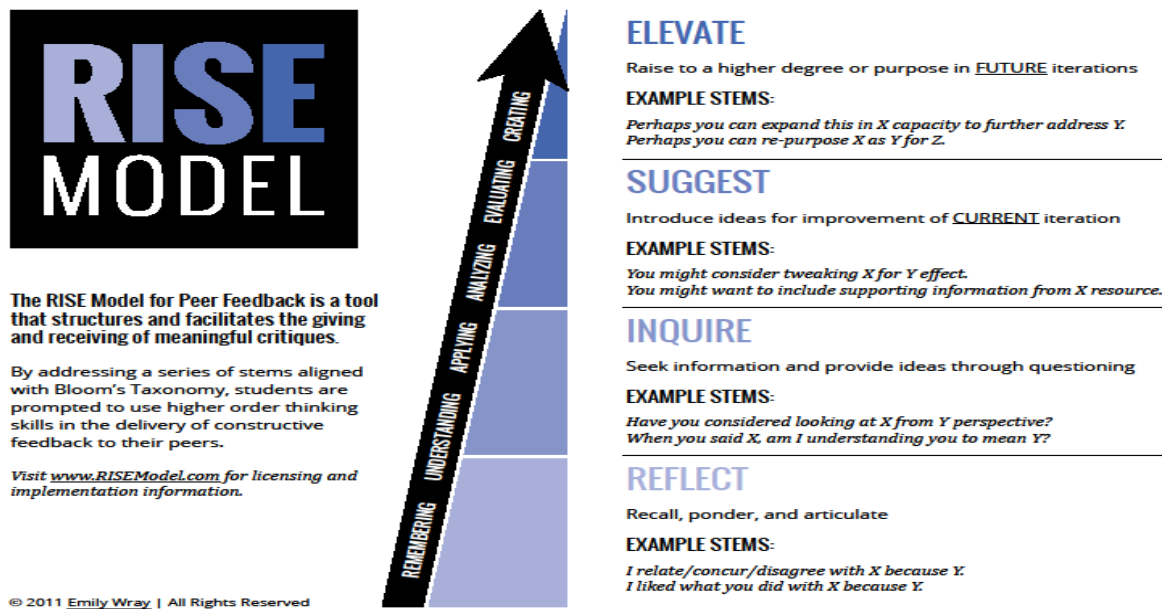
Figure 1: The RISE model by Emily Wray (2011)
.Source:https://static1.squarespace.com/static/502c5d7e24aca01df4766eb3/t/5c4e71ecf950b77130df
9756/1548644844456/RISE-Model-Peer-by-Emily-Wray-2018.pdf

2. Aligning learning outcomes, assessment and teaching methods is another mechanism for optimizing and ensuring successful assessment in education. This is shown in the figure 2 below;
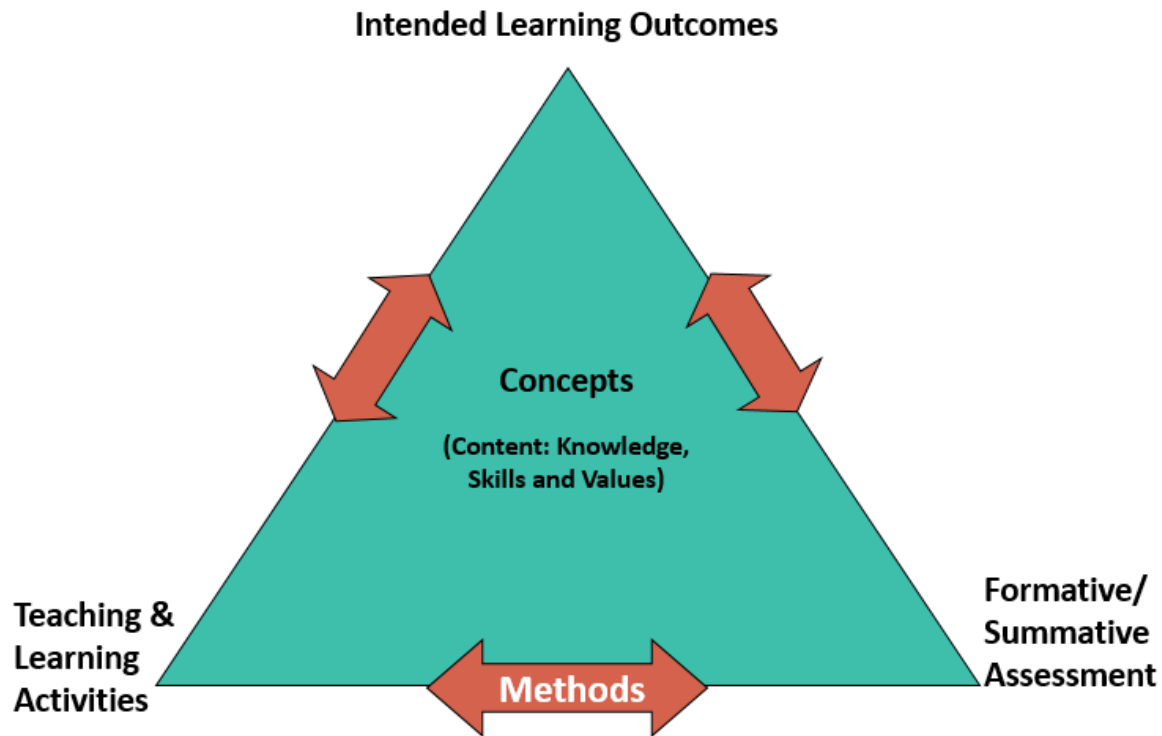
Figure 7. Aligning learning outcomes, assessments and teaching methods
Ellis, D. (2007). Teaching Excellence Academy workshop. University of Waterloo, Canada.
Source: https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/catalogs/tip-sheets/aligning-outcomes-assessments-and-instruction

**Role of Quality Assurance in Educational Assessment**

Quality assurance is a belief or teaching in which all the functional activities of learning institutions are handled equally and planned. The findings of empirical literature indicate that the activities of quality assurance officials in schools play a very vital role in the teaching and learning process which includes improved learners' cognitive skills, teachers' confidence and professional growth in terms of discipline and ethics of teaching, creativity and innovation. Quality assurance in education is all about the evaluative and critical appraisal of institutions' effectiveness and efficiency through teaching and learning and assessing of quality of Basic Education provisions in learning institutions. It also entails probing issues affecting students and workers of educational institutions to ensure that every learner in school receives qualitative education through collaboration with other stakeholders. The essence of quality assurance is to prove that all the academic work or activities these learners have engaged in has been quality assured to the required standards. Quality assurance has to authenticate and guarantee the validity of our qualifications. Tryna (2017) opines that the role

quality assurance plays in education is (a) it is used to provide feedback to academics on the effectiveness of the teaching and assessment method.

(b) To assess the extent to which the learning outcomes of a module course programme have been achieved.

(c) To evaluate the effectiveness of the learning environment.

(d) To monitor the quality of assessment methods used.

There is a very crucial need for the development of a reliable and valid instrument for assessing high -quality teaching, learning and assessment. The feedback from such measures can go a long way to contribute to the enhancement of quality assessment among learners, teachers and learning institutions.

**Conclusion**

Quality assurance and control play an essential role in ensuring excellence in the Nigerian education system. These mechanisms are fundamental for maintaining high standards in learning assessment, encompassing aspects such as personnel, curriculum, space, equipment, methodology, and other best practices and components for the full actualization of learning goals. They address issues of malpractice, equity and ensure professionalism in the Nigeria educational systems. Quality assurance is also check put in place  the integrity of assessments, promote fairness, and continually monitos and enhance good assessment practices. The Nigeria educational system is striving for excellence hence, Quality  assurance and control, including review of assessment pattern,  teachers delivery styles, program evaluations, and qualifications within the school system is crucial for upholding educational  excellence and standards.

**Suggestions**

1.  Learning  should aim to present intended outcomes and success criteria in a universal way
2.  The information gathered through assessment should be applied during learning evaluation by assessors.
3. Stakeholders should be encouraged to partake in the quality assurance process by providing channels for feedback and suggestions to improve educational products and processes.
4. The ministry of education can use the assessment outcome to better undertake policy review and development at a national level, so that government finding and policy intervention as targeted and channeled appropriately to support improved learner outcome since good policies drives the economy and uphold standards.

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