

PLANNING & DESIGNING ASSESSMENT

Assessment is not simply a process of checking what learners have learnt but rather a powerful means of directing teaching and improving learning in the classroom. In planning a learning topic or unit, the teacher needs to integrate their assessment strategy with their teaching or lesson plan to maximise the development of understanding in their learners. While informal assessment is usually ongoing, formal assessments should also be conducted before the learning activity, during the learning activity and after the learning activity.

TIMING OF ASSESSMENT

1. Pre-Learning Assessment

An effective teacher matches their teaching practice with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that their learners bring to the classroom.

Assessing before learning commences provides the following opportunities:

for the teacher to –

- determine learners' baseline knowledge;
- reveal learners' misconceptions; and
- guide and facilitate lesson planning for the particular class of learners;

for the learner to –

- create anticipation of what is to come;
- inspire interest; and
- generate enthusiasm.

Assessing before teaching starts reveals each learner's unique knowledge, their background influences and prior experiences, their abilities, learning styles, multiple intelligences, motivations, behaviours, interests, talents, likes, dislikes and attitudes, their feelings and emotions.

Data collected by the teacher through this pre-learning assessment identifies the entry point for new information for each learner and allows the teacher to strategically customise their teaching practice for the particular group of learners. From these results, the teacher can set their learning targets, devise appropriate teaching activities and select and prepare ideal learning materials.

It is very important to remember that any marks recorded for pre-learning assessment should not be used summatively.

2. Mid-Learning Assessment

An effective teacher builds assessment into the teaching process so that it supports and enhances learning rather than just documenting learning. Classroom assessment is a powerful tool defining what learners learn and value, communicating learning priorities and teacher expectations.

Assessing during teaching and learning provides the following opportunities:

for the teacher to –

- gauge learners' on-going progress;
- identify learner misconceptions and special needs; and
- adapt teaching practice to correct and address these needs to improve the learning experience;

for the learner to –

- receive detailed feedback on progress;
- facilitate self-monitoring of progress;
- encourage meta-cognition (as learners think about their own learning and how to improve it); and
- motivate for success.

Data collected by the teacher through this mid-learning assessment can be used to make optimal teacher decisions concerning the delivery of instruction: the pace, the amount, the level of difficulty, the flow, the relevance; the configuration of learner groups and maintaining positive learner attention, interest and behaviour. Teachers can adjust their lesson planning, to redirect their teaching practice to meet their learners specific needs and optimise their learning experience.

Again, it is very important to remember that any marks recorded for amid-learning assessment should not be used summatively unless this was the explicit purpose.

3. Post-Learning Assessment

An effective teacher knows that it is absolutely vital that the assessment methods, techniques and tools match their learning targets and teaching practice.

Assessing after learning is completed provides the following opportunities:

for the teacher to –

- establish the extent and depth of learner knowledge and understanding;
- record and report summatively on learner achievement;
- evaluate the success of the teaching practice; and in so doing,
- inform on future teaching practice;

for the learner to –

- build confidence in their competence;
- reinforce positive self-efficacy; and
- develop intrinsic motivation.

Summative assessments must judge learner achievement through representative sampling, optimal number and length of assessments and suitable preparation of the learners for the assessment in order to be fair and accurate. This is vital as results of these assessments have important consequences for learners because they affect their term marks, grade promotion, placement in classes, choice of subjects and the conferring of honours and awards.