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External Evaluation in Improving Learners' Outcomes in Basic Schools: Challenges and Way Forward

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A B S T R A C T

The paper examined the challenges and solutions to the eternal evaluation of learners' learning outcomes at public basic schools. Basic school is important for students' improvement since it relates to students' understanding for basic knowledge, including mathematics and science. Implementing external evaluation in Nigerian basic schools can be challenging due to a variety of factors. These may include limited resources, cultural barriers, and a lack of understanding of the purpose and value of evaluation. One way forward in addressing these challenges is to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of evaluation in improving learners' outcomes. This can be achieved through training and capacity building for stakeholders, including teachers, school administrators, and government officials. Ultimately, improving learners' outcomes in Nigerian basic schools requires a collaborative effort involving all stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and communities. By working together and embracing new approaches and technologies, all learners have access to high-quality education and opportunities to promote continuous improvement and excellence in education.

A R T I C L E I N F O

1. INTRODUCTION

Basic education refers to the education that children aged six to fourteen years undergo. Basic education is important for students' improvement since it relates to students' understanding for basic knowledge, including mathematics and science. It is the education that a youngster receives from the time he or she can count. It is the government's role to provide an enabling environment for teachers and learners, such as good classrooms in a quiet and serene environment to accommodate learners, as part of Nigeria's basic education system, which was 6-3-3-4 and is now transformed into 9-3-4, education from primary school level to Junior Secondary School 3 (Primary One to JSS 3). To improve the quality of education in our schools, the government has a significant role to play. Without confusion, the local government's control of elementary education is a massive undertaking that will require substantial commitment before much progress can be made. Primary school education in Nigeria should be under the jurisdiction and management of both the federal and local governments (Olutola *et al.,* 2022). Because it is the government closest to the people and has less responsibility for education administration, the local government should be involved. The federal government's education spending appears to be less than 10% of its entire spending.

The existing spending structure in education is such that postsecondary education receives the lion's share while elementary education receives the least (Alabi *et al*., 2010). Learning outcomes are specific information, abilities, or behaviors that learners are expected to demonstrate following a period of study (Kurniawati, 2022). According to Rahmawati (2021), learning outcomes are what a learner should be able to "Do" as a result of learning activities. In other words, "Do" refers to a learner's ability to display skill, knowledge, or behavior as a result of a learning activity (Dulklang & Sangsawang, 2021). The systematic process of gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data on measured performances of learners to evaluate the extent to which the learners are attaining the instructional objectives is known as the evaluation of learning outcomes (Agarry & Ogundele, 2023). Learning outcomes should be evaluated appropriately based on learning behavior, proper evaluation methodologies, and unique learners' performance requirements for success. In 1997, the Federal Government of Nigeria, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established the groundwork for a nationwide survey of Nigeria's primary education.

The evaluation was titled "Monitoring of learning outcomes" and was conducted across the country. External evaluation has a lot of advantages, one of which is its high reliability. It assures that all learners are evaluated on the same activities and that their outcomes are evaluated according to the same criteria. The quality of basic education in Nigeria is low as judged by learners' learning outcomes (Omolafe, 2021).

2. METHODS

This study is a literature survey. We get data from internet sources, especially articles published in international journals, which were then collected, analyzed, and summarized to conclude what we get.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Concept of External Evaluation

External evaluation is an important tool in measuring the effectiveness of educational programs and identifying areas for improvement. Evaluators are given a pre-determined list

of aspects to be reviewed by educational authorities, external evaluation is normally concerned with processes and outcomes. External evaluations have the advantage of giving greater impartiality, and they are usually conducted using standardized examinations. The systematic method of gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data on measured performances of learners to evaluate the amount to which the learners are attaining the instructional objectives is known as the eternal evaluation of learning outcomes. Process evaluation determines the gap between an existing condition and the desired state and the need evaluation should determine the gap between an existing condition and the desired condition. As a result, the desired circumstances expected of the learners will be evaluated. Learning outcomes should be evaluated based on learner performance criteria, appropriate evaluation methodologies, and unique learner performance requirements for success. Given the foregoing, the examination should focus on the fundamental domains. Knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are listed in order from lowest to best cognitive ability.

External evaluation is frequently done under monitored conditions to guarantee that the learner did the work being evaluated. External evaluation is frequently criticized for having poorer validity than teacher-based evaluation. It usually takes the form of a written test administered under supervised conditions, with only a limited number of curriculum objectives covered. It can also hurt education and learning. The concern is that teachers will emphasize test-taking skills, especially if the exam results have high stakes for their learners. Initial evaluation: The teacher's appraisal of the learners before beginning a certain topic to evaluate their level and prior experience with the issue (Octaviani *et al.,* 2022). Fundamental evaluation (formative): The teacher's evaluation of the learners during educational circumstances and the educational process to determine whether or not the goals have been met. Summative evaluation (final): The teacher's appraisal of the learners at the end of the learning period to evaluate their progress in the school curriculum. Consequential evaluation: This evaluation is done after the curriculum or program has been completed and after a period of final review to determine and measure its impact.

3.2. Meaning of Learning Outcome in Education

Learning outcomes leading outcomes are specific information, abilities, or behaviors that learners are expected to demonstrate following a period of study. The nation's worry about the amount of knowledge acquisition among its learner population is reflected in the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are what a learner is supposed to be able to "Do" as a result of learning activities. In other words, "Do" refers to a learner's ability to display skill, knowledge, or behavior as a result of a learning activity (Rahmawati, 2021). Learning outcomes are what learners will do to display learning, the setting in which they will exhibit learning, and how well they will demonstrate their learning (Agarry & Ogundele, 2023). He also emphasized the importance of observing learning results. Learning outcomes "direct statements that explain the competencies that learners should know and be able to demonstrate the following completion of a course or program." Success in education is determined by the warmth and supportive relationships that teachers foster with and among their learners. When teachers and learners have a positive relationship, the child will be able to achieve the required high-quality learning results, while the teacher will be satisfied with his or her employment.

However, the type of teacher-learner relationship the instructor developed determines the quality of learning outcomes the child receives. A positive teacher-learner relationship with a high level of warmth and little conflict must be established to improve positive learners'

learning results. Although learning can take place everywhere and in any circumstance, educators prefer it to take place in a high-quality learning environment.

3.3. Empirical Studies on External Evaluation of Learners' Learning Outcome

In Nigeria, there is a paucity of evidence on the outcomes of basic education. There is no nationally structured method for measuring learning outcomes regularly. However, indicate relatively modest levels of learning. There appears to be a disconnect between the evidence that learning outcomes are universal and the evidence that they are not. looked into the underlying relational structure between learner evaluations of teaching effectiveness and achievement of learner learning outcomes in business-related courses in their study. They find little evidence for the validity as a broad indication of instructional effectiveness or learner learning.

The researchers address the feasibility of utilizing fuzzy logic to evaluate learning outcomes (LOs) in an outcome-based education system. They discuss both classic and fuzzy LO evaluation techniques. They discover that the LO variation in fuzzy technique evaluations is minor when compared to the classic method utilizing mean square error. The fuzzy technique was proven to allow flexibility in modifying the input-output connection based on the course evaluation, which is typically an issue for an instructor using the traditional method, and the possibility of applying fuzzy LO evaluation was concluded.

Investigates the actions and methods of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs), as well as their use of learning outcomes as a means of increasing transparency in higher education. The findings show that learning outcomes have a limited influence, prompting a debate on learning outcomes activities as a policy issue. Learning outcomes policies that are misaligned with aims, misapplied in implementation, and misdirected in goal, according to the study's findings, limit the potential of learning outcomes as a transparency tool.

Potential challenges that may arise when implementing external evaluation to improve learners' outcomes in basic schools in Nigeria:

(i) Limited resources: Basic schools in Nigeria often have limited resources, including funding, materials, and technology. This may limit the ability of schools to implement effective evaluation strategies and may hinder progress toward improving learners' outcomes.

(ii) Cultural and linguistic differences: Nigeria is a diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups and numerous languages. This cultural and linguistic diversity may pose challenges when conducting external evaluation, as it may be difficult to develop assessment tools and measures that are appropriate and valid for all communities.

(iii) Resistance to change: Some teachers and school leaders may resist external evaluation and may view it as a threat to their autonomy or a way to undermine their authority. This resistance may hinder progress toward improving learners' outcomes.

(iv) Limited data and information: Basic schools in Nigeria may not have access to reliable data and information on student performance and learning outcomes. This may limit the ability of external evaluators to provide meaningful feedback and may hinder progress toward improving learners' outcomes.

(v) Political and institutional barriers: There may be political and institutional barriers that limit the ability of external evaluators to conduct evaluations and provide feedback to schools. This could include bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, and lack of accountability.

Potential ways forward for external evaluation to improve learners' outcomes in Nigerian basic schools:

(i)   Identify and prioritize areas for improvement: Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the basic schools in Nigeria to identify areas where learners are struggling the most. This could include assessing literacy and numeracy skills, as well as other subject areas such as science and social studies. Once the areas of weakness have been identified, prioritize them based on their impact on learners' outcomes.

(ii)   Develop effective assessment tools: Develop and use appropriate assessment tools to evaluate learners' outcomes in each identified area of weakness. These tools should be valid and reliable. They also should be designed to provide meaningful feedback to teachers and school leaders.

(iii)   Provide professional development opportunities: Teachers and school leaders need to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to improve learners' outcomes. Provide them with ongoing professional development opportunities, including workshops, training sessions, and mentorship programs.

(iv)   Encourage collaboration and sharing of best practices: Encourage collaboration and sharing of best practices among teachers and school leaders in Nigeria. This could include organizing regular workshops and conferences where teachers can share their experiences and learn from one another.

(v)   Monitor and evaluate progress: Regularly monitor and evaluate progress towards improving learners' outcomes in basic schools in Nigeria. This could include collecting data on student performance, conducting follow-up assessments, and providing feedback to teachers and school leaders.

(vi)   Foster a culture of accountability: Hold teachers and school leaders accountable for improving learners' outcomes. This could include setting clear goals and targets, providing regular feedback, and taking appropriate action when outcomes are not improving.

(vii)   Involve parents and community: Encourage parents and community members to be actively involved in the evaluation process. This could include providing opportunities for them to participate in school meetings, offering parenting workshops, and involving them in decision-making related to school improvement.

(viii)   Provide resources and support: Ensure that teachers and school leaders have access to the necessary resources and support to improve learners' outcomes. This could include providing materials, technology, and training, as well as offering financial support for school improvement initiatives.

(ix)   Foster a positive school culture: Encourage a positive school culture that values learning, respect, and collaboration. This could include promoting positive behaviors, recognizing and rewarding good performance, and fostering a sense of community among students, teachers, and parents.

(x)   Use data to inform decision-making: Use data to inform decision-making related to school improvement. This could include analyzing student performance data, tracking progress toward goals, and using this information to make informed decisions about resource allocation and school policies.

(xi)   Engage with experts and research: Seek out the expertise of experts and researchers in the field of education to inform evaluation efforts. This could include conducting research studies, attending conferences and workshops, and engaging with organizations that specialize in education reform.

4. CONCLUSION

External evaluation can play a critical role in improving learners' outcomes in basic schools in Nigeria. By providing an objective and independent assessment of school performance, external evaluators can identify strengths and weaknesses and provide recommendations for improvement. External evaluations can also help promote transparency and accountability and encourage collaboration and sharing of best practices among teachers and school leaders. Acknowledging these challenges, it can help improve learners' outcomes in the long run. By implementing these strategies, external evaluation can play a critical role in improving learners' outcomes in Nigerian basic schools and help ensure that all children have access to quality education. It can help create a culture of continuous improvement and excellence in education.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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