

ASSESSMENTS CONDUCTED AT THE BASIC
EDUCATION LEVEL IN GHANA

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AT

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Introduction

- This is an overview of assessments conducted at the basic education level in Ghana.
- It highlights the coverage and rationale for the assessments, uses and dissemination of the data gathered and our needs required for better measurements and reporting of results

Structure of Education in Ghana

- Education in Ghana operates on a 6 -3 -3 -4 system.
- The first 9 years, known as Basic Education, comprises Primary (6 years) and Junior High (3 years) schools.
- Following the 2007 Education Reform, 2 years of Kindergarten has been added to basic education
- Secondary/technical/vocational school runs for 3 years and 4 years of undergraduate course completes the system.

Assessments at the Basic Level

A. School Based Assessment

- Assessment at the basic level is partly school based.
- It is expressly stated in the syllabuses that “the form of assessment in schools will follow the requirements of the school based assessment...”

Assessments at the Basic Level: SBA

Contd

- The SBA is to consist of 12 assessments per year.
- Guidelines for the SBA are provided in *The Teachers' Handbook on School Based Assessment.*
- The scores of each pupil are to be recorded in his/her Cumulative Record Book (see Appendix A for copy).
- The scores are submitted to the West African Examination Council (WAEC) at the end of Junior High School (JHS) as Continuous Assessment Scores (CASS).

Assessments at the Basic Level

- **B. Public Examination**
- The public exam is called the ***Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)***.
- It is conducted by The West African Examinations Council, (WAEC), Ghana.
- It is a high stake exit point examination taken at the end of JHS.
- It is based on the national curriculum.
- There are two papers for each subject; multiple choice, Paper 1, and written, Paper 2.

Assessments at the Basic Level: BECE

Contd

- Majority of the written or essay papers require elaborate answers in several paragraphs.
- For three subjects, short-structured responses are required.
- Each candidate is expected to offer seven compulsory subjects.
- There are two optional subjects available.

Assessments at the Basic Level: BECE

Contd

- The subjects offered are:
 - A. Mandatory Subjects**
 - English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Integrated Science, Religious and Moral Education, Basic Design and Technology (BDT)*, and Ghanaian Language and Culture*
 - * BDT consists of three subjects/options; Visual Arts, Home Economics and Basic Technical Skills, and the candidate is to select one of them.

Assessments at the Basic Level: BECE

Contd

- *There are 11 approved Ghanaian Languages from which the candidate selects one. The languages are ; Dagaare, Dagbani, Dangme, Ewe, Fante, Ga, Gonja, Kasem, Nzema, Twi Asante and Twi Akuapem

B. Elective/Optional Subjects

- French and ICT are offered by the candidate who received tuition in them.

Assessments at the Basic Level: BECE

Contd

Grading

- The candidate is graded on his/her Continuous Assessment and External Examination, BECE, scores contributed on a 30:70 ratio respectively.
- The 9-point Stanine Grading System is used.

Assessments at the Basic Level: BECE

Contd

Purposes/Uses of Results

- Certification
- Placement/select into secondary/technical/vocational schools
- National awards/scholarships
- Demand accountability from teaching staff
- Policy decisions such as curriculum reform and designing strategies for improvement in performance

Assessments at the Basic Level: BECE

Contd

Funding/Exam Fees

- The examination fee is shared between the Ministry of Education and the candidate irrespective of the school attended on a 70:30 ratio.

Assessments at the Basic Level

C. National Assessments

- The following sample-based National assessments are conducted by education authorities:
 - National Education Assessment (NEA)
 - Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)
 - Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA)

Assessments at the Basic Level

National Assessments

1. National Education Assessment (NEA)

- NEA is a biennial measure of student competency in mathematics and English in primary grades 3 and 6 (P3 and P6).
- The latest, the July 2013 NEA was the fifth application of NEA.
- NEA tests are based on national curricula.

Assessments at the Basic Level

National Assessments: NEA Contd

- The tests range between 30 to 40 multiple-choice questions.
- Test items cover skills and knowledge across the following domains:

English

- Listening
- Reading Comprehension
- Usage (Grammatical Structure)

Assessments at the Basic Level

National Assessments: NEA Contd

Mathematics

- Basic Operations
- Numbers and Numerals
- Measurement
- Shape and Space
- Collecting and Handling Data

Assessments at the Basic Level

National Assessments: NEA Contd

Interpretation of Results

- Pupils are considered to have achieved
- ***Minimum Competency*** if they answer at least 35% of the test items correctly;
- ***Proficiency*** if they answer at least 55% correctly.

Assessments at the Basic Level

National Assessments

1. Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)

- EGRA is designed to assess reading skills in 11 Ghanaian Languages and in English.
- The subtasks of the 2013 instrument were;
- *Listening Comprehension, Letter-sound identification, Non-word reading, Oral passage reading and Reading Comprehension*

Assessments at the Basic Level

National Assessments

- **Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA)**
- EGMA was designed to gather information about basic mathematics competencies.
- For the 2013 EGMA the subtasks were;
- *Number Identification, Addition and Substruction (level 1), Quantity discrimination (number comparison), Missing number (number pattern), Addition and Substruction (level 2), Word Problems*

Dissemination of Assessment Results/Reports

- For **NEA**, **EGRA** and **EGMA**, Technical Reports on their Findings are issued and circulated among relevant stakeholders.
- In addition, the reports are placed at the website of the Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Service

Dissemination of Results/Reports

- For **BECE** each participating school is issued with its results.
- Candidates can also obtain their results from WAEC website.
- Copies of the composite results (in soft copy) are given to the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service.
- Similarly the Chief Examiners' Reports on the exams are distributed to stakeholders.

Dissemination of Results/Reports

- On request, WAEC prepares specific data on performance of candidates for the education authorities.

Challenges

1. Funding

- All the assessments face funding problem.
- The 2014 Report on NEA states emphatically that “the sustainability of Ghana’s primary school national assessment programs is at risk, ... until more funding can be allocated to services” or “external funding” keeps coming in.
- For BECE Government annually places cap on the fee charged.

Challenges

2. Trained Assessors

- There is the challenge of getting ready and qualified personnel as item writers and/or markers.

3. Malpractice

- For the BECE the control of malpractice at some centres is a challenge.

Challenges

4. Credibility/Validity/Reliability of CASS

Attributable to factors like;

- Tests vary from school to school in several respects.
- Some teachers lack knowledge of testing.
- The conduct of SBA and recording of CASS is laborious and could make teachers cut corners.

Needs

- Technical assistance to train assessors, item writers, etc
- Computers and internet connectivity to capture data and access reports at school and district levels.
- Infrastructure for Computer Based Testing

References

1. Ghana 2013 Early Grade Reading Assessment and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment Report of Findings, May 2014 (Final Version)
www.eddataglobal.org
2. National Education Assessment 2011 Findings Report www.eddataglobal.org
3. National Syllabus for Mathematics (Primary and Junior High School)

Thank You