



Reassessing standardized tests: Evaluating their effectiveness in school performance measurement

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ABSTRACT

This research article reassesses the role of standardized tests in educational assessment, focusing on their complexities, historical context, and implications. It examines the accountability, and academic achievement benchmarks these tests provide while addressing criticisms such as cultural bias and narrowly teaching to the test. Alternative assessment methods, including formative and performance-based assessments, are also explored to offer a more holistic view of student learning and school performance. The article aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of standardized tests' role in education, driving discussions on potential reforms that prioritize equitable and comprehensive assessment strategies. Critics raise concerns about the limitations of these tests, including their inability to capture the full range of student abilities, leading to biased and narrow educational outcomes. The study calls for a more balanced approach to educational assessment, integrating multiple methods to foster a more prosperous and fairer evaluation of student performance.

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ABSTRAK

Artikel penelitian ini mengevaluasi kembali peran tes terstandarisasi dalam penilaian pendidikan, dengan fokus pada kompleksitas, konteks historis, dan implikasinya. Artikel ini membahas tolok ukur akuntabilitas dan pencapaian akademik yang dihasilkan oleh tes ini, sembari mengatasi kritik seperti bias budaya dan pengajaran yang hanya berfokus pada persiapan tes. Metode penilaian alternatif, termasuk penilaian formatif dan berbasis kinerja, juga dieksplorasi karena menawarkan pandangan yang lebih holistik terhadap pembelajaran siswa dan kinerja sekolah. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk memberikan kontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang peran tes terstandarisasi dalam pendidikan, serta mendorong diskusi mengenai reformasi yang memprioritaskan strategi penilaian yang adil dan komprehensif. Para kritikus mengkhawatirkan keterbatasan tes ini, termasuk ketidakmampuannya menangkap seluruh kemampuan siswa, yang menyebabkan hasil pendidikan yang bias dan sempit.

Kata Kunci: Asesmen pendidikan; keadilan pendidikan; kinerja siswa; tes terstandarisasi

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INTRODUCTION

Standardized tests have long been crucial in assessing student performance and school effectiveness. These assessments provide a uniform measure of student achievement, enabling comparisons across different schools, districts, and states. However, the reliance on these tests has sparked considerable debate among educators, policymakers, and researchers. Standardized tests serve multiple purposes in the educational landscape, such as consistently measuring student learning and knowledge acquisition, providing valuable data for stakeholders, and are often linked to accountability measures. Schools are usually evaluated based on their students' performance on these assessments, which can influence funding, teacher evaluations, and even school closures. Standardized testing advocates argue it provides objective data on student performance, identifies achievement gaps, and catalyzes educational system improvement, offering several benefits (Khattari & Sweet, 2013). However, critics argue that these assessments may not accurately reflect a student's true abilities or potential, neglecting critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills essential for success in the real world. The high-stakes nature of standardized testing, according to Kelly in a book titled *"The High Stakes of Testing: Exploring Student Experience with Standardized Assessment Through Governmentality"* can lead to a "teaching to the test" mentality, where educators focus primarily on test preparation rather than fostering a rich and comprehensive learning experience. Additionally, research has shown that socioeconomic status, race, and language proficiency can impact test performance, raising questions about the fairness and equity of these assessments (Herman & Cook, 2019; Lee & Luykx, 2013).

The accountability movement of the early 21st century further solidified the role of standardized tests in education. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandated annual testing in reading and mathematics for students in grades 3-8 and once in high school, tying school funding and performance to students' test scores. This legislation underscored the belief that standardized tests could serve as essential tools for accountability, ensuring that schools met specific performance benchmarks (Forte, 2010). However, this era also intensified the debate surrounding standardized assessments, with critics arguing that the heavy emphasis on test scores led to a narrow focus on test preparation, compromising the quality of education and diminishing the richness of the curriculum (Ramires et al., 2018). Standardized tests are crucial in holding schools accountable for their student's academic achievements, ensuring they meet the educational needs of all students (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005). These tests provide a uniform metric for evaluating student performance across different demographics and locations, allowing for comparisons between schools and districts. They can also influence funding decisions, administrative policies, and teacher evaluations, with high-performing schools receiving additional resources or facing sanctions or reduced funding. Kubissyn and Borich, in their book titled *"Educational Testing and Measurement"* argue that standardized tests provide a clear and objective means of assessing student learning, highlighting disparities in achievement and prompting policymakers to address inequities in educational resources and support. They also establish a baseline for student performance, enabling educators to identify areas where students may be struggling and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. This data-driven approach fosters a more tailored educational experience for students, ultimately improving outcomes.

However, the reliance on standardized tests as accountability measures has its challenges. Critics argue that these assessments often do not capture the full spectrum of student learning and development, as factors such as socioeconomic background, language proficiency, and access to resources can significantly influence test performance (Farrington et al., 2012; Sackett et al., 2009). The pressure associated with high-stakes testing can lead to a narrowing of the curriculum, diminishing students' engagement and creativity, and creating an environment of anxiety for both students and teachers. To effectively utilize standardized tests as accountability measures, adopting a more holistic approach to education assessment is essential, integrating multiple forms of evaluation, including formative assessments, portfolios, and student self-assessment. Educational stakeholders must prioritize the development of tests that are culturally responsive and reflective of diverse learning styles. Schools can promote a more inclusive educational environment that values all students' strengths and capabilities by ensuring fair and equitable assessments.

FairTest indicates that states heavily reliant on standardized test scores experience more significant disparities in educational resources between affluent and low-income schools (Baldner, 2021). A study revealed by Ushormirsky & Williams in *"Funding Gaps 2015: Too Many States Still Spend Less on Educating Students Who Need the Most"* Education Trust found that schools serving predominantly low-income students received \$1,200 less per pupil in funding compared to their wealthier counterparts, a gap that lower standardized test scores can exacerbate. Research from Hanushek in a book titled *"Making Schools Work: Improving Performance and Controlling Costs"* indicates that approximately 60% of states use standardized test performance to determine school funding levels. This reliance creates a feedback loop, limiting the ability of schools with lower scores to receive less funding, which limits their ability to improve educational quality and student outcomes. The evidence suggests that tying school funding to test scores can perpetuate inequities and undermine the quality of education for the most vulnerable student populations.

This research aims to critically evaluate the effectiveness of standardized tests as measures of school performance, examining their correlation with academic performance, equity issues, construct validity, and stakeholder perspectives. The research's purpose is to contribute to the ongoing debate surrounding the role of standardized tests in the educational landscape. The study aims to illuminate the strengths and limitations of these assessments, ultimately informing better educational practices and policies. The significance of this research lies in its potential to influence educational policy and practice. By shedding light on the consequences of standardized testing on student learning and equity, the findings can drive initiatives to create a more inclusive and equitable educational system. Additionally, understanding the limitations of standardized tests can help educators adopt more holistic and diverse assessment methods that foster critical thinking and creativity among students. The research aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on standardized testing by providing a nuanced analysis of its effectiveness as a school performance measurement tool, bridging the gap between theoretical discussions and practical implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Background on Standardized Testing

The origins of standardized testing can be traced back to the early 20th century, coinciding with significant social and educational reforms. The progressive education movement emerged in the early 1900s, aiming to reform educational practices to be more inclusive and equitable. In 1905, Alfred Binet and Théodore Simon developed the first intelligence test, the Binet-Simon scale, which laid the groundwork for future standardized assessments (Cicciola et al., 2014). By the 1920s, standardized tests had gained popularity as educators and policymakers sought ways to uniformly evaluate student learning and performance. The mid-20th century saw the proliferation of standardized tests, particularly in response to increasing demands for educational accountability (Kim, 2018). According to Campbell et al. in a book titled "NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress: Three Decades of Student Performance" The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was initiated in 1969, providing a nationwide measure of student achievement in key subjects.

Historically, Kubissyn and Borich, in their book titled "Educational Testing and Measurement" argue standardized tests were implemented to ensure all students had access to fair assessments of their academic abilities, maintain accountability, and uphold educational standards. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 further solidified this approach, mandating annual testing for students in grades 3-8 and once in high school. However, the reliance on standardized tests has become contentious, raising questions about their ability to measure student learning and school effectiveness accurately (Scott & Husain, 2021). Halpern's book "Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum: A Brief Edition of Thought & knowledge" argues that these tests often fail to capture the breadth of knowledge and skills students acquire, emphasizing rote memorization over critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. One of the significant limitations of standardized testing is its inability to account for students' diverse learning styles and needs (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021; Marougkas et al., 2023). Many assessments are designed with a one-size-fits-all approach, which can disadvantage students who excel in alternative learning environments or demonstrate competencies through different modalities (Awad & Al Adwan, 2024). Additionally, standardized tests often reflect cultural biases that can skew results, leading to disparities in performance that do not accurately reflect a student's knowledge or potential (Meissel et al., 2017).

In the 21st century, the role of standardized tests in education is becoming increasingly important due to technological advancements, shifting pedagogical approaches, and an evolving understanding of intelligence. Current trends in standardized tests include the rise of digital assessments, a focus on holistic assessment, an increased focus on social-emotional learning (SEL), global comparisons and benchmarking, and the need for more comprehensive evaluations (Dusenbury et al., 2019; Stillman et al., 2018). Digital assessments allow for adaptive testing that tailors questions to individual student abilities in real-time, providing a more personalized experience and enhancing learning (Yildirim-Erbasli & Bulut, 2023). Holistic assessment is gaining traction, with many educational systems integrating formative assessments, project-based evaluations, and portfolio reviews alongside traditional tests (Eswaran, 2024). This approach acknowledges the limitations of standardized testing in capturing the full spectrum of student learning and development, valuing diverse skills and competencies.

Standardized Testing

The reliance on these assessments raises questions about cultural bias and the extent to which they genuinely reflect a nation's educational quality. Critics argue that these assessments are insufficient for measuring educational success due to cultural bias, teaching to the test, and neglect of non-cognitive skills (Hora & Blackburn Cohen, 2018; Klieme, 2020). Several trends in standardized testing have emerged.

1. Computer-based assessments are becoming more common, enabling more efficient test administration and scoring. This shift enhances the testing experience and allows for more nuanced data regarding student performance. However, disparities in access to technology pose challenges, particularly in rural areas with limited resources.
2. Focus on competency-based assessments: There is a growing movement towards competency-based assessments, which emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, moving beyond rote memorization. The Nigerian government has initiated reforms to align standardized tests with these competencies.
3. Increased stakeholder engagement: Parents, educators, and community leaders are increasingly involved in discussing assessment methods and their implications for students. This engagement ensures that standardized tests are relevant and reflective of the educational needs of diverse populations.
4. Responsive assessment frameworks: In response to criticisms of standardized testing, there is a trend towards developing more responsive assessment frameworks that accommodate different learning styles and cultural contexts. The Nigerian educational system increasingly adopts such frameworks to provide a more comprehensive view of student performance.
5. Policy reforms and accountability systems: Nigeria's ongoing policy reforms aim to enhance the accountability of educational institutions, shifting focus towards creating a more holistic assessment environment that includes test scores and other indicators of school performance.

However, the effectiveness and relevance of these tests in reflecting student learning and school performance are increasingly under scrutiny. One of the primary functions of standardized tests is to facilitate benchmarking and comparison across different educational institutions (Asfahani et al., 2024). By administering the same assessments to students in various schools, educators and policymakers can obtain a clear and quantifiable measure of academic performance. This comparability can illuminate disparities in educational outcomes and help identify schools that are excelling or underperforming relative to their peers. Standardized tests also create a baseline for educational performance, setting benchmarks that schools are expected to meet (Schueler et al., 2022). For example, the No Child Left Behind Act in the United States emphasized accountability by requiring states to assess student performance in reading and mathematics to close achievement gaps. These assessments allow stakeholders to understand where students stand about predetermined standards or expectations. The ability to compare test scores across schools and districts enables educators and researchers to identify trends and patterns in student performance over time (Schwartz et al., 2021). For instance, if a particular district consistently scores below the state average, further investigation into underlying causes may be conducted. However, there are inherent limitations to benchmarking through standardized tests, such as failing to capture the full spectrum of student abilities and learning styles and the pressure

associated with "teaching to the test". Halpern, in a book titled "*Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking*" argued that these tests often emphasize rote memorization and narrow aspects of learning, neglecting critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, standardized tests have been criticized for not accurately capturing students' diverse strengths and learning styles, with factors such as socioeconomic status, language barriers, and test anxiety disproportionately affecting test outcomes.

METHODS

A systematic review was conducted to assess the effectiveness of standardized tests in education. The review involved identifying, selecting, and synthesizing relevant literature on the topic, focusing on the impact of standardized tests on student performance, equity in education, and long-term educational outcomes. The search was conducted across multiple academic databases, including ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, with specific keywords such as "standardized testing", "educational assessment", "student performance", and "educational equity". Inclusion criteria were established to filter studies that focused on school performance measurement. A synthesis analysis was conducted to integrate findings from the identified studies, categorizing the literature into thematic areas such as the correlation between standardized test scores and student academic performance, the influence of socioeconomic factors on test outcomes, and the effectiveness of standardized tests in predicting future success. The analysis aimed to uncover patterns, contradictions, and gaps in existing research, providing a comprehensive overview of the current landscape regarding standardized testing. An empirical studies analysis was conducted to assess the real-world implications of standardized testing on educational environments. Researchers analyzed data from diverse educational settings, including urban, suburban, and rural schools, to understand how contextual factors influence the effectiveness of standardized assessments. The research also considered the perspectives of key stakeholders, including educators, students, and parents, through interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Advantages of Standardized Testing

Standardized tests are a crucial tool in educational assessment, serving as a reliable indicator of student performance and school effectiveness. They have two key advantages: objectivity and consistency. Objectivity is achieved through fixed questions and a standardized grading rubric, eliminating discrepancies that may arise from differing classroom environments or assessment strategies. This uniformity eliminates discrepancies and reduces the potential for bias, which can affect other assessment forms. Consistency across different contexts is another advantage of standardized tests. These assessments provide a stable framework for measuring student performance across different schools, districts, and states. By utilizing the same standards and benchmarks, standardized tests facilitate comparisons of academic achievement on a broader scale. This consistency is essential for stakeholders at various levels, as it allows for the identification of trends and disparities in student performance.

Kubissyn and Borich, in their book titled *“Educational Testing and Measurement”* study emphasize the significance of standardized tests in data-driven decision-making, as they provide an objective measure of student performance, aiding in informed curriculum development and identifying areas for improvement. Standardized tests also highlight trends over time, allowing educators to discern whether curriculum changes yield positive results or if further adjustments are necessary. This iterative process fosters a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring the curriculum remains relevant and effective in meeting students' needs. Resource allocation decisions are also critical in standardized testing. Moreover, standardized testing provides parents and the community with accessible information regarding school performance, fostering greater community involvement and advocacy for necessary changes. While the advantages of standardized testing in data-driven decision-making are significant, it is essential to acknowledge their limitations.

Standardized testing data can also guide resource allocation within school systems. For example, A California school district used test scores to allocate funding for tutoring and support programs, prioritizing schools with consistently low standardized test performance for resources like after-school programs and summer intervention classes (Keppler et al., 2022). Standardized tests also facilitate a continuous improvement model within educational systems. When schools routinely analyze test data, they can create feedback loops that inform instructional practices. A Florida high school case study by Saunders in a book titled *“The Flipped Classroom: Its Effect on Student Academic Achievement and Critical Thinking Skills in High School Mathematics”* reveals that teachers' emphasis on problem-solving and critical thinking skills improved test scores and prepared students for future academic challenges.

Standardized tests are crucial in revealing disparities in student performance across demographic groups, such as race, socioeconomic status, and language proficiency. These disparities can persist from early education through higher education, indicating systemic issues beyond individual performance. Recent studies have shown that Black, Hispanic, and Native American students consistently score lower than their white counterparts, prompting questions about educational equity and the underlying factors contributing to these disparities (Bottiani et al., 2017). Additionally, standardized tests reveal achievement gaps based on socioeconomic status, with students receiving free or reduced-price lunches performing worse on assessments than those without economic hardships (Suna et al., 2020; White et al., 2016). This data suggests that external socioeconomic factors can significantly impact educational outcomes, underscoring the need for targeted interventions. Nichols and Berliner, in a book titled *“Collateral Damage: How high-stakes testing corrupts America's Schools”* argued that standardized tests are criticized for their limitations in capturing the full range of student abilities and knowledge, as well as factors like test anxiety, cultural bias, and language barriers. These issues can disproportionately affect marginalized groups, such as English language learners, who may struggle with language-heavy test questions. Additionally, the high-stakes nature of these tests can lead to teaching to the test, neglecting the diverse learning needs of all students (Polesel et al., 2014).

As a result, there is a growing call for alternative assessment methods that offer a more comprehensive understanding of student performance. Shchetynska, in a book titled *“The Effectiveness of Project-Based Learning on Student Geometry Achievement and Creativity Within the Requirements of 21st-Century Learning”* argued formative assessments, project-

based learning evaluations, and portfolios can offer richer insights into a student's capabilities beyond standardized test scores, providing a more nuanced view of achievement gaps by considering individual learning styles and contextual factors. Factors contributing to achievement gaps include systemic issues such as inequitable school funding, differences in access to quality educational resources, and varying levels of parental support. Schools in lower-income areas often have fewer resources, less experienced teachers, and outdated materials, which can adversely affect student performance (Baker et al., 2016). Students from marginalized communities often encounter external challenges, such as food insecurity, unstable housing, and limited access to extracurricular enrichment opportunities.

Limitations of Standardized Testing: Narrow Focus on Test Preparation

Standardized testing, or "teaching to the test" is a controversial approach that prioritizes content and skills evaluated in tests over a broader educational experience. This approach has been criticized for impacting curriculum, teacher autonomy, student engagement, and motivation. Schools often focus on subjects and skills directly assessed, reducing time allocated for subjects like art, music, and physical education, which are essential for a well-rounded education. This can lead to a limited educational experience, prioritizing rote memorization over comprehensive understanding. Standardized tests also impose a rigid framework on educators, dictating how they structure lessons. This can stifle creativity and innovation in teaching, leading to a classroom environment that may not cater to diverse learning styles or individual student needs. This can further exacerbate educational inequities. Another critical limitation of standardized testing is its focus on short-term gains rather than fostering long-term learning (Khasawneh et al., 2021; Prediger et al., 2023). Schools may achieve impressive score improvements in the immediate aftermath of test preparation, but these gains often do not translate into lasting knowledge or skills. This disconnect raises questions about the actual value of standardized assessments in measuring educational effectiveness. Standardized tests have been found to undermine education quality, leading educators to prioritize test-taking over fostering critical thinking skills among students (D'Agostino, 2023).

Curricula increasingly prioritize test-related content over creative and critical thinking exercises, hindering students' opportunities to engage with diverse subjects and stifling their ability to think critically and creatively. This narrow focus can have profound implications for student development, as it may lead to students missing out on opportunities for inquiry-based learning and collaborative problem-solving. Activities that encourage exploration, innovation, and critical discourse are often sidelined in favor of repetitive test practice, resulting in students graduating with strong test-taking skills but lacking the analytical abilities necessary for success in higher education and the workforce. This shift in focus can disproportionately affect students from marginalized backgrounds, as under-resourced schools often face even more stringent test preparation practices, leading to an educational experience that is transactional rather than transformative. A reevaluation of the role of standardized tests in education is necessary to address this issue. A more balanced assessment approach incorporating formative assessments, project-based learning, and holistic evaluations could foster an educational environment prioritizing critical thinking and creativity. By diversifying assessment methods, educators can create a curriculum that

values inquiry, creativity, and critical analysis, fostering a generation of learners capable of innovative problem-solving.

Cultural bias is another issue with standardized tests. These assessments are designed around a specific cultural framework, reflecting the dominant demographic group's values, language, and experiences. This can lead students from diverse cultural backgrounds to interpret questions differently or struggle with unfamiliar contexts. Language barriers can significantly impact non-native speakers' performance. At the same time, cultural references embedded within test questions can alienate students from different backgrounds, making it difficult for them to relate to the material (Altakhaineh & Melo-Pfeifer, 2024; Sung, 2022). Policymakers must consider alternative assessment methods for contextual factors such as socioeconomic status and cultural background. Moving towards equity requires developing more equitable assessment practices, including performance-based assessments, portfolio evaluations, and formative assessments. These approaches would allow for a more nuanced view of student capabilities and recognize the diverse strengths and challenges that different learners bring. Educational institutions should invest in training educators to identify and mitigate their own biases, ensuring all students receive equitable support tailored to their unique needs.

Another critical limitation of standardized testing is its inability to provide students, educators, and parents with meaningful feedback. These assessments often yield a single score that fails to illuminate specific strengths and weaknesses in a student's learning process, leaving educators with minimal diagnostic information to guide instructional strategies or interventions. The emphasis on standardized testing can inadvertently narrow the curriculum, as educators may feel compelled to "teach to the test" leading to a diminished focus on holistic education, creativity, and critical inquiry. Standardized tests have limitations, particularly in their narrow scope of measurement. They primarily focus on rote memorization and multiple-choice format, which fails to capture the full spectrum of student learning and competencies essential for success in today's rapidly evolving world. Research indicates that standardized tests often overlook critical skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and emotional intelligence, which are increasingly recognized as vital for academic success and real-world application (George, 2023).

Formative Assessments

Alternative assessment methods include formative assessments, portfolio-based assessments, and performance-based assessments. Formative assessments provide real-time feedback on student learning, benefiting engagement and performance. Portfolio-based assessments demonstrate a student's growth over time, with examples from schools using them to assess competence. Performance-based assessments require students to demonstrate skills through practical applications, with success stories from institutions implementing these methods.

Formative assessments are an alternative to standardized tests, providing real-time feedback on student learning and allowing educators to adjust their teaching strategies promptly (Shirley & Irving, 2015; Wilkie & Liefeth, 2022). They involve techniques like quizzes, class discussions, peer assessments, and reflective journals designed to gauge understanding

continuously. Formative assessments offer immediate feedback, which is crucial for students and teachers. Students who engage in formative assessments exhibit a greater understanding of the material, while teachers can tailor their teaching strategies to address specific learning needs. This adaptability fosters a more personalized learning environment, enhancing overall classroom performance. Formative assessments also strengthen student engagement and motivation. Traditional standardized tests can induce anxiety and discourage students, leading to negative impacts on performance (Jerrim, 2023). In contrast, formative assessments create a supportive atmosphere where students feel encouraged to take risks and embrace challenges (Seligman et al., 2021). By framing assessments as opportunities for growth, educators can cultivate a culture of continuous improvement. Studies have revealed that formative assessments encourage students to take ownership of their learning, seek help, and explore resources, leading to deeper understanding and mastery of content (Bennett, 2011; Lamberg et al., 2020). This sense of agency enhances academic performance and fosters a lifelong love for learning.

Aligning assessments with learning objectives is another critical finding regarding formative assessments. Standardized tests may not accurately reflect the specific goals of a curriculum. Still, formative assessments can be designed to assess individual learning objectives and competencies, ensuring that evaluations are relevant and meaningful. This alignment allows educators to monitor progress toward specific academic goals and enable targeted interventions for students falling behind. Policymakers must consider integrating formative assessment practices into the assessment framework, providing educators with the necessary resources and training to implement these methods effectively. Formative assessments have significantly enhanced student engagement, academic performance, and personalized instruction. Research has shown that when teachers use formative assessment strategies, students are more likely to participate actively in their learning process, as they receive immediate feedback that helps them identify their strengths and weaknesses (Clark, 2012; Wanner & Palmer, 2018). This increased involvement stems from the immediate feedback, which allows students to feel supported and understand their learning trajectory.

Furthermore, formative assessments encourage a growth mindset, fostering student resilience and persistence. By shifting the focus from grades to learning, students perceive challenges as opportunities for improvement rather than threats to their self-esteem. This transformation in perspective can lead to increased motivation and a greater willingness to engage with the material. Previous research found formative assessment strategies significantly positively affect student achievement, with an effect size of 0.90 (Cai et al., 2022). This suggests that formative assessments can lead to substantial gains in learning outcomes. For instance, a longitudinal study found that students who participated in classrooms utilizing formative assessments scored higher on standardized tests than their peers in traditional settings (Chen et al., 2020). Through regular inspections, educators can pinpoint areas where students struggle and adjust their teaching methods accordingly, fostering a more inclusive learning environment. This personalized approach encourages a more inclusive learning environment, allowing educators to address diverse learning styles and paces.

In Nigeria, implementing formative assessments has shown promising results in enhancing student competence (Adewusi et al., 2023; Damilola, 2020; Perry, 2013). Schools like St. Mary's Secondary School, Lagos, Community Secondary School, Enugu, and Federal

Government College, Kaduna, have implemented these strategies, leading to improved academic performance and deeper engagement among students. However, challenges remain, such as large class sizes, limited resources, and inadequate training in assessment methodologies. These factors can hinder the effective implementation of formative assessments. Additionally, there is a need for continuous professional development to equip teachers with the necessary skills to design and conduct formative evaluations effectively. Despite these challenges, formative assessments present a viable alternative to traditional standardized testing, offering a more personalized learning experience and promoting critical thinking skills among students. Using formative assessments in Nigerian schools has shown promising results in addressing diverse learning needs, improving overall academic outcomes, and fostering critical thinking skills.

Portfolio-Based Assessments

The effectiveness of standardized tests in measuring student performance has been questioned, leading to the rise of portfolio-based assessments. Portfolios are collections of a student's work over time, including essays, projects, and presentations, which provide a more comprehensive view of their capabilities (Lam, 2024). These assessments are not just compilations of work but carefully curated collections that reflect a student's progress, achievements, and areas for improvement. Portfolio assessments demonstrate growth and learning by allowing students to showcase their best work, highlighting the learning process rather than just the outcomes (Lam, 2014). This approach emphasizes formative assessment, continuously integrating feedback into the learning experience. Portfolios can include drafts of research papers, annotated bibliographies, and reflections on the writing process, providing a holistic view of a student's capabilities, learning styles, and areas needing further development. Portfolio assessments encourage self-reflection and ownership, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning journey. This process fosters a sense of responsibility and encourages them to set personal learning goals. Portfolios can be tailored to individual learning objectives, allowing personalized learning pathways. This adaptability aligns with the diverse needs of students, providing opportunities for creativity and self-expression that standardized tests often overlook. Portfolio assessments promote collaboration and communication among students, teachers, and parents. They serve as a platform for dialogue, enabling students to present their work and discuss their learning strategies with peers and educators. This collaborative environment fosters community and supports a shared understanding of educational goals.

However, portfolio-based assessments have challenges. Implementing such assessments requires significant time and resources from educators, as teachers must be trained to evaluate portfolios effectively and provide constructive feedback. Establishing clear criteria for evaluation can be complex, as portfolios often encompass a wide range of skills and content. Portfolio-based assessments have emerged as a promising alternative to traditional assessment methods like standardized tests (Abrar-ul-Hassan et al., 2021). These assessments foster greater student engagement and ownership of learning by allowing students to select and reflect on their work, encouraging them to take responsibility for their educational progress. Portfolio assessments also provide comprehensive skill evaluation, allowing educators to assess students' abilities to work in teams, think critically, and apply

knowledge to real-world situations (Andrade & Zeigner, 2021; Ginting, 2023). This approach is precious in today's job market, as it allows for more targeted feedback and support from educators. Portfolio assessments also offer cultural relevance and inclusivity, allowing students to incorporate culturally relevant materials and personal experiences into their work. Portfolios enable students to express their identities and contexts, fostering a more inclusive educational environment (Sherfinski et al., 2019).

Several schools have adopted portfolio-based assessments with promising results in Nigeria, where educational reforms are crucial to address diverse learning needs. Portfolio-based assessments have improved student engagement and motivation by allowing students to take ownership of their learning and set personal learning goals (Abbott et al., 2021). This shift from a passive learning environment to an active one has increased intrinsic motivation. Adeyemi-Adewoyin, in research titled "*Effects of Portfolio and Peer Assessment Strategies on Senior Secondary School Economics Student Learning Outcomes In Oke-Ogun, Oyo State, Nigeria*" Portfolios also provide a holistic evaluation of student competence, capturing the diverse talents of students, especially those from varied cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. They allow for the inclusion of a broader range of skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, and collaborative abilities, which are essential in today's globalized world. Portfolio-based assessments also promote reflective learning, encouraging students to reflect on their work, identify areas for improvement, and celebrate their achievements (Khoir et al., 2024). This reflective practice fosters a growth mindset and equips students with the skills to self-evaluate and adapt in future learning scenarios. However, implementing portfolio-based assessments faces challenges, such as adequate training in assessment practices, the potential for increased workload in managing portfolios, and clear guidelines and criteria to ensure consistency and fairness in evaluation. Overall, portfolio-based assessments represent a viable alternative to standardized testing in measuring student competence, aligning more closely with the diverse needs of learners in today's educational context.

Performance-Based Assessments

Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) are an alternative to traditional standardized tests focusing on rote memorization and recall (Griffith & Lim, 2012). PBAs encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and knowledge application, aligning more closely with the skills necessary for success in today's complex world (Brighton et al., 2022). Critical characteristics of PBAs include authentic tasks, higher-order thinking, collaboration and communication, and various formats. Authentic tasks involve students engaging in meaningful applications of their learning, such as designing experiments to test a hypothesis (Brighton et al., 2022). Higher-order thinking demands students to understand content creatively and critically, while collaboration and communication skills are fostered through group work (Brighton et al., 2022). PBAs can take various forms, such as presentations, portfolios, projects, and performances, allowing for a more comprehensive evaluation of a student's abilities across different domains. Overall, PBAs provide students with a more engaging and effective way to evaluate their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts. Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) can enhance student engagement, provide a comprehensive view of student capabilities, and address equity concerns. They can help identify areas where

students excel and need additional support. However, PBAs also present challenges, such as the need for adequate training for educators, the development of clear rubrics for assessment, and the time required for assessment and feedback. Additionally, they must be aligned with curricular standards to maintain academic rigor. PBAs offer valuable insights. They must be carefully considered and implemented to ensure their effectiveness in measuring student achievement and school performance.

Performance-based assessments offer several benefits, including holistic evaluation, increased engagement, and development of 21st-century skills (Gallardo, 2020). These assessments require students to showcase critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, aligning with contemporary education goals. They also encourage active learning, fostering a deeper connection to the material. Unlike standardized tests, performance-based tasks can create an atmosphere of anxiety and disengagement, potentially negatively impacting student performance and overall learning outcomes (Wise, 2019). Several educational institutions have successfully implemented performance-based assessments, yielding positive outcomes that bolster the argument for transitioning away from standardized tests. Fine and Pryiomka, in a book titled *Assessing College Readiness through Authentic Student Work: How the City University of New York and the New York Performance Standards Consortium Are Collaborating toward Equity* conducted by the Consortium, found that schools using performance-based assessments in the New York Performance Standards Consortium, consisting of 38 high schools, adopted a performance-based assessment system demonstrated mastery of the subject matter with higher graduation rates compared to those relying on standardized tests. Performance-based assessments within the University of Washington's School of Medicine emphasize the importance of clinical skills and patient interactions (Sousa et al., 2011). Through Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs), students were evaluated on their ability to communicate effectively, solve clinical problems, and apply knowledge in practice. Graduates from these programs consistently outperform their peers from programs primarily relying on traditional testing methods.

Assessment for Learning Project in New Zealand has incorporated performance-based assessments into schools, promoting a deeper understanding of material over rote memorization. This approach has increased student engagement, improved critical thinking skills, and a more positive classroom environment (Dobson & Fudiyartanto, 2023). Ojo study titled *Effects of Information Technology-Integrated Teaching Strategies on Secondary School Chemistry Students' Learning Outcomes in Lagos State, Nigeria* on Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) focuses on evaluating students' understanding and application of concepts through practical and action-oriented methods. The findings showed that students who participated in action-based testing performed significantly better than those who underwent conventional testing methods. This suggests that PBAs can enhance students' achievement, particularly in subjects like electrochemistry. The study also examined the transfer of learning, assessing whether the training and strategies led to meaningful changes in behavior and knowledge application outside the classroom. The knowledge structure assessment was key, evaluating students' ability to identify and manipulate concepts through various procedures. Effectiveness of project-based learning (PBL) in improving junior secondary school students' academic achievement in descriptive geometry in Katsina, Nigeria. The research highlights the need for active learning strategies, particularly in mathematics, to enhance problem-solving and critical-thinking skills among students

(Abubakar et al., 2020). Despite investments in educational resources, students' achievements in geometry remain unsatisfactory due to ineffective teaching methods and a lack of engagement with the subject matter. The study also revealed a significant difference in performance, leading to rejecting the null hypothesis in favor of project-based learning. The study reinforces the notion that active learning strategies can lead to better educational outcomes in mathematics. The study concludes that project-based learning significantly improves students' performance and attitudes in geometry, promoting self-discovery and problem-solving skills.

CONCLUSION

This article underscores the importance of reassessing standardized tests' role within the educational evaluation framework. By doing so, policymakers can create more equitable educational policies and ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed. Standardized tests have significant implications for education policy and practice, as they should not be the sole indicator of educational success. Over-reliance on standardized tests can lead to misguided policies that fail to address the root causes of educational challenges. Educators should be aware of the potential pitfalls associated with standardized tests. They should use them with other evaluation methods, such as formative assessments, portfolios, and performance-based evaluations. Recommendations to foster a more equitable and effective educational landscape include diversifying assessment methods, focusing on equity, emphasizing critical thinking, and continuing professional development. This approach will help educators tailor instruction more effectively and address the disparities in educational opportunities that standardized tests can exacerbate. Additionally, curriculum reforms should prioritize the development of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills over rote memorization.

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