



Ultimate evaluation in education: A panacea for functional university education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper critically examined ultimate evaluation in education as a panacea for functional and effective university education in Nigeria. It argued that university education which is the apex level of education in Nigeria should inculcate in students the specialized skills required to contribute for development within and outside the country. It further argued that formative and summative evaluation carried out in universities are not without certain limitations, hence could not provide the needed valid feedback on identified users' needs, set objectives, content adequacy, effectiveness, suitability and relevancy of university programmes in line with global dynamism of 21st century. In view of the above, ultimate evaluation is extensively described, its place in ensuring functional university education especially for Nigeria highlighted. Compulsory, and periodic ultimate evaluation of university programmes was recommended.

Keywords: ultimate evaluation, functional and university education

Introduction

Functionality of education is no doubt a relative function of effective educational evaluation. University education is said to be functional when the predetermined or set objectives of a given programme is achieved. In this context, the students that were exposed to the programme possess, exhibit, manifest and apply the expected behaviors, skills and knowledge confirming in practical terms that the objectives of the programmes were achieved. Functional university education may be impossible without effective evaluation since the success and failure of any educational system towards achieving its stipulated objectives and goals is to a large extent dependent on the sincerity, quality and authenticity of its evaluation system.

Poor and unauthentic evaluation is injurious to every nation. Hence, destroying a nation may not require the use of fire arms and heavy explosives but rather a simple act of allowing cheating in examinations. Consequently, the school produces educated illiterates that will be counter-productive, like doctors killing patients, judges perverting justice and leaders making wrong policies, and the likes. In view of the above assertion, it is necessary to advocate for another type of evaluation called ultimate evaluation, for functional university education, which is the focus of this paper.

State of the Art

Education at all levels is meant to achieve stipulated objectives. To determine whether these objectives are achieved, students are normally subjected to two types of evaluation – formative and summative. In the recent era, given the inherent short comings of formative and summative evaluation in providing valid picture and feedback on the functionality of university programmes beyond certification, this paper advocates for and describes an improved type of evaluation referred to as ultimate evaluation.

Concept of Educational Evaluation

Evaluation simply means the act of passing a valid judgment. Educational evaluation is the hub of effective and functional education of every nation. Iwuagwu (2011) referred to evaluation as the sum total processes involved in gathering information or data, analyzing the information to pass valid judgments on event or programme of interest. It is said to be educational when it is carried on education related matters.

Nworgu (2015) ^[14] explained that the term educational evaluation is generally used in two senses. In the first sense, it connotes the process of making value judgments or taking decisions about events, objects or their characteristics based or predicated on certain criterion or criteria using empirical data or information made available through measurement. Evaluation, in this sense, is purely qualitative and is preceded by measurement.

Here, measurement makes available the pertinent information and evaluation judges the worth or value of that information. Evaluation therefore takes measurement a step further. In this sense, evaluation begins where measurement stops. This conception portrays measurement as distinct from evaluation. Hence it appears to be the underlying conception whenever and wherever the phrase 'measurement and evaluation' is used.

Types of Educational Evaluation

There are many different types of evaluation. Many factors influence decisions over what type of evaluation to use. ActionAid (2016) identified five criteria for classification of evaluations based on International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, 2011). Such criteria include:

1. who conducts the evaluation external, internal, joint, peer & participatory evaluations.
2. when the evaluation is carried out -midterm, final, end of phase, expost and real time evaluations.
3. the general approach used -process, impact, theory based, case based, Realist, Synthesis, Meta and Developmental evaluations.
4. cross-cutting themes -Utilization focused, Gender responsive, Feminist, Equity focused, Participatory, Empowerment evaluations and finally.
5. The purpose of the evaluation -formative and Summative.

Supporting this classification, Rossett and Sheldon (2001) stated categorically that two main types of educational evaluation is formative and summative evaluation, hence other types are either found in formative or summative evaluation. This paper adopts the classification of educational evaluation according to purposes. However, it argues that classification of educational evaluation in this sense is not complete without ultimate evaluation. Hence the formative and summative evaluation do not serve effectively the purpose ultimate evaluation serves.

A formative evaluation is normally carried out before or during a project or programme. Thus, formative evaluations are basically done on the fly. They permit the designers, learners, instructors, and managers to monitor how well the instructional goals and objectives are being met (Nworgu, 2015). Its main purpose is to identify deficiencies so that proper learning intervention that allows learners to master the required skills and knowledge, can take place. Formative evaluation is also useful in analyzing learning materials, student learning and achievements, and teacher effectiveness. It is primarily a building process which accumulates a series of components of new materials, skills, and problems into an ultimate meaningful whole (Wally Guyot, 1978). In addition, prototyping is used in formative evaluations to test a particular design aspect by using one or more iterations. The purpose of a formative evaluation is to help shape the future of the project or programme concerned, and thereby improve performance. A formative evaluation tends to be more focused on learning and management than accountability.

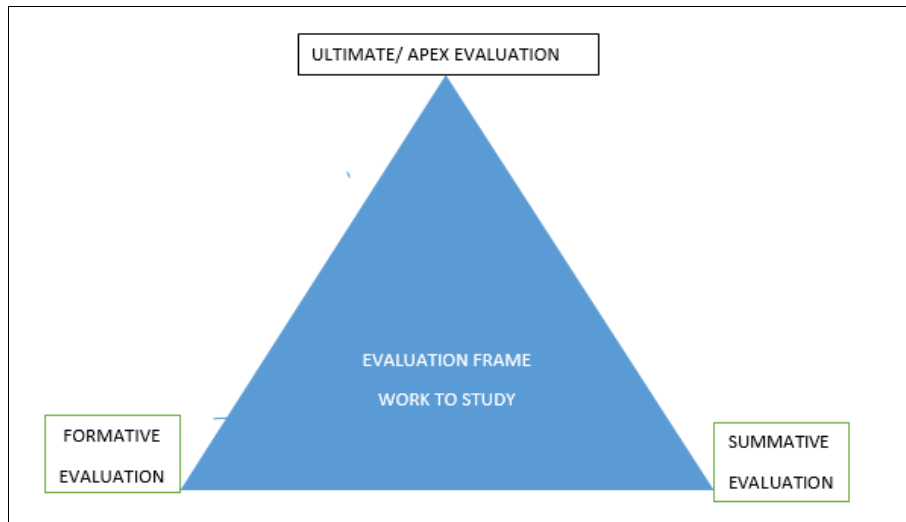
By contrast, Scriven (1967) ^[16] first suggested a distinction between formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation was intended to foster development and improvement within an ongoing activity (or person, product, program, etc.). Summative evaluation, in contrast, is used to assess whether the results of the object being evaluated (program, intervention, person, etc.) met the stated goals. A summative evaluation is often carried out at the end of a project or programme. It is usually designed to assess what was achieved (Nworgu, 2015) ^[14]. Summative evaluations are often implemented when a project or programme has ended, or is about to end, and when it is no longer possible to make changes to that project or programme. However, lessons may still be learned that could help shape future interventions.

Irrespective of all these typologies of evaluations, the major role of evaluation is to ensure functionality of a given educational programme or system through effective feedback mechanism. However, the major criteria underlying this classification are stages of the programme at which the evaluation is carried out, and the purpose the evaluation is meant to serve.

Review of available literature such as Nworgu (2015) ^[14]; INTRAC (2017) among others have shown that education evaluators emphasizes more on only formative evaluation and summative evaluation of instruction as typified by the stage and purpose it is given during teaching and learning. However, this study is made to draw the attention of evaluators, to another type of evaluation referred by the authors as ultimate evaluation (apex of all the evaluation), its indisputable importance in functionality university education in Nigeria.

Concept of Ultimate Evaluation

Ultimate evaluation is a term used to describe apex stage of instructional, curricular and educational programme evaluation preceded by formative evaluation and summative evaluation if organized in ascending order. Besides, as represented below using triangular model, ultimate evaluation interacts in triangular manner with other type of evaluations: formative and summative evaluation for feedback mechanism as demonstrated with the conceptual framework below.

A contextual relationship among formative, summative and ultimate evaluation

Ultimate evaluation simply referred to on- the- job evaluation. According Suchman (1967) ^[18], ultimate evaluation refers to the process of determination of the overall success of a programme in relation to its statement of objective. Also Stufflebeam and Anthony (1985) ^[17] defined ultimate evaluation as the determination of the overall success of a programme vis-a- vis its stated objectives". In line with authors above, this kind of evaluation places emphasis on the pre-stated goals and objective of the programme (s) of interest with actual outcome of the programmes. However, the authors' definition of ultimate evaluation is some worth limited for their emphases on the determining the overall success of programme in relation to its objectives. Hence, this paper argues given the evidence from dynamism of 21st century that a programme may be successful in achieving its goals and objective but remains obsolete, non-functional and unsuitable. Thus, in the context of this study, ultimate evaluation is modified and is operationally defined as on- the - job evaluation to determine the overall success, suitability, functionality and the extent a given programme achieved what it ought to achieve in real life situation. It is the apex or zenith stage of evaluation that inform the instructional, programme, and curriculum planners if the ultimate goal of the programme is achieved or not. It's worthwhile, relevance and suitability of the entire programme to the contemporary and dynamic society; employers, trend of events, local and global policies and innovative. It is proposed to ascertain if a given programme achieves its stipulated objectives and goal in practical terms. Hence it focuses on the quality of products of a given education programme of interest beyond summative evaluation (end of programme evaluation), certification and grading.

This type of evaluation focuses on collection and analysis of data on-the- job performances of products of an educational programme from graduation to the first five years at the place of work to ascertain if the programme catered for the requisite skills, need and objectives it is purposed to achieve in practical terms. The delimitation of period of five years is to ensure that the extent of ultimate performance exhibited by the products is not a function of experience or as a result of change in conventional way of doing things (innovation) yet to be captured by the curriculum of the programme.

In line with the above assertion, for example it is expected that any graduate of education economics programme of a university should be able to develop and deliver a good lesson on any topic on secondary school economics scheme of work, employ suitable teaching method or methods in relative to the topic, maintain adequate classroom control and effectively achieve the instructional objectives of a given topic. While a graduate of building engineering is expected to interpret and develop a building plan drawn by an architect. In the same vain, a graduate of computer engineering should be able to develop and run a program at least basic programing, java and other programing languages. A graduate of statistics is expected to create and maintain a good data- base. In like manner, pupils who have been exposed to primary stage of education is expected to acquire numerical skills, write and read fluently.

Thus, ultimate evaluation is concerned with the ultimate questions such as, are the products of a given programme, stages of education what they should be? Are the graduants of given programme or stages of education measuring up to the expectations of the programme? Are the products of an educational programme able to do what is expected of the people exposed to such programme or stage of education? To what extent do the products or graduants cope with jobs relative to their areas of specialization? Are the skills offered by a programme relevant and in tune with the innovations in dynamic society and global village? To what extent do the products of the programme meet up with world class standard? And so on. In line with the above ultimate questions the functionality of the Nigeria university education programme should be reconsidered.

Concept of University Education

Nigeria education system comprised of three levels. These include basic (lower basic and upper basic), secondary, and tertiary level of education (Polly techniques, colleges of education and universities) National

policy on education (Adebisi, 2014; NPE, 2016) [2]. This levels of education are pre-occupied with different responsibilities in producing labour force in Nigeria with the university programme as the apex of all in producing specialized labour force. University refers to an institution of higher education which provides facilities for teaching and research and authorized to award academic degrees. It should be noted that although the university is an institution of higher education, not all institutions of higher education in Nigeria are authorized to award academic degrees. For example, the Survey School established in Lagos in 1908 and the Yaba Higher College officially opened in January, 1934 were institutions of higher learning, they did not award academic degrees. Also, the colleges of education, Advanced Teachers college, e.t.c are not degree awarding although they are institutions of higher education, this justifies the importance of university education in Nigeria. In April, 1959, the government appointed the Ashby commission to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post school certificate and higher education over the next twenty years, which is from 1960-1980. The federal government of Nigeria accepted the Ashby Report which among other things, recommended four universities to be established in Nigeria. However, the government went ahead and established five universities. They are; The University of Ibadan, The University of Lagos, The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, The University of Ife, Ile-Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. All these five universities were in existence in 1962. Given the increasing need and demand for university education in Nigeria more universities were established by different administrations in Nigeria in 1970, 1980, 1988, 1990 and 2015 respectively, which amounted to 39 public universities (federal and state owned universities) in Nigeria. On the contrary, According to the information available on the NUC websites as of August 1st, 2019, there are currently 174 approved universities in Nigeria. It comprises of 43 Federal Universities, 52 State Universities and 79 Private Universities (NUC, 2015; Mogaji, 2019) [12].

Functionality of University Education in Nigeria

Given the above ultimate evaluation questions, the author observed that summative evaluation does not give or provide an in-depth feedback on the suitability and functionality of a give education programme. Hence summative evaluation of educational programme (teacher education, medicine, engineering etc) of different disciplines are mostly used for certification and grading as state by (Nworgu, 2015) [14]. This poses great limitation on summative evaluation of instructional programmes to cater for the programme being what is expected to be at a given time (suitability) and the programme achieving what is expected of it upon completion (functionality) in the face of examination malpractices. In line with the above assertion, Afolabi (2012) argued that certification and certificate grade acquired may be deceptive, not represent the real ability or achievement of the bearer. Buttressing the above point, the author identified test instrument as a major tool for summative evaluation and opine that the inherent limitation of test if not properly handled is the major source of the deception.

Hence the various factors that affect test score reliability, validity and usability are related to the test itself such as different standard, motivational factors, familiarity with test items, item bias, cheating, and other related examination practice such as the use of unstandardized test instrument across the universities which questions the uniformity in the standard and quality of grades brandish by graduance of various universities in Nigeria. In line with the above assertion Nworgu, (2015) [14] advised that decision should be based on authentic and accurate test score hence unauthentic or inaccurate data lead to wrong decision which may adversely affect the learner and the society at large. In reference to media statement accredited to former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2009 that Nigerian youths are on employable and was paraphrased by President Muhammad Buhari in 2018 that Nigerian youths are lazy, it is not out of point to question the functionality of Nigeria university education programmes Hence Godwin, Bassey and Johnson (2012) observed disconnection of the university and employers of labour leading to irrelevant curricular activities that are unable to meet the demand of the labour market which is evidenced by high level of unemployment. The above observation by Godwin, Bassey and Johnson is affirmed by employers of labour bitter complains that many skills required in the labour market are not taught in the universities and graduates parade certificates indicating fantastic grades but lack the skills required of them.

Place of Ultimate Evaluation in ensuring Functional University Education in Nigeria

The place of ultimate evaluation as the apex level of curricular or programme evaluation is not negotiable if there is honest desire to ensure functional university education in Nigeria. Since summative evaluation does not have the facilities to provide information on suitability of programmes, relevancy of the programmes, curricular weakness and strength of university programmes; and over time innovations in line with need of labour market locally and globally.

Recalling that one of the major objectives of university education in Nigeria is to contribute to national development through manpower training (NPE, 2016). By implication, this act involves train and produce labour force skilled enough to provide the needed services in the labour market. Given that the labour market has witnessed high graded certificate paraded in the labour market by graduates who lack required skills for job relevant to their area of specialization. Interestingly, Godwin, Bassey and Johnson (2012) in affirmation to the above claims, reported that disconnection exists between the supply of and the demand for graduates in the Nigerian labour market, large numbers of unemployed graduates, low productivity of graduates employed; and that most Nigerian universities curricular bear little or no practical relevance to the skill needs of the economy. In view of the above reports of Godwin, Bassey and Johnson; and the employers of labour, a strong ground to

say that formative and summative evaluation lack the capability of ensuring the achievement of the objectives of university education referred in this paper as functionality of university education.

Thus, ultimate evaluation is deemed necessary in the face of certain inherent weaknesses of end of programme (summative) evaluation in accounting for the functionality of university education programme in Nigeria. Since this ultimate stage of evaluation is purposed for the needed feedback on the extent the Nigeria university programmes achieve her stipulated goals, provides information on the suitability of the curricular of the various university programmes, areas of weaknesses and strength of the programmes of every Nigeria university, ability of the programmes to raise skilled labours of both local and international standards and relevancy of the programme in the face of dynamism and innovations that characterized the 21st century. Since, evidence abounds that high rate of unemployment in Nigeria may not only be blamed on the government policies but also on the disconnection between the university and the labour market. For instance, Corominas, Saurina and Villar (2010) observed a mismatch between the competences that are required in jobs and the skills taught in universities. Dabalén, Oni, & Olatunde, (2000) reported that university graduates are poorly trained and unproductive on the job, that graduate skills have steadily deteriorated over the past decade especially in oral and written communication skills; and that application of information communication and technological skills are every poor. The above submissions call for rethink on the part of the evaluators to adopt ultimate evaluation to ascertain and ensure functionality of university education programmes and other education programmes.

Conclusion

This paper therefore concludes that functionality of Nigeria University is dependent on the authentic and unbiased feedback information on the actual state and status of Nigeria university graduates of various universities and programmes, relative to their areas of specialization at the places of their employments. The authors given the limitations associated with summative evaluation as mentioned above submits that ultimate evaluation is a Panacea for functional university education in Nigeria.

Recommendation

Given the necessity of ultimate evaluation on functionality of university education, the author recommends that:

1. Nigeria University Commission (NUC), NGOs, universities and other stakeholders in education should conduct ultimate evaluation on every university programmes from time to time, to ascertain the efficacy of the university programmes. This will provide data to determine the relevance of the curriculum, suitability and sustainability of these programmes.
2. Specifically ultimate evaluation of university programmes should be carried out at interval of five years by NUC as this will help the university to be in line or pace with the dynamism and innovation in the society.

Education Implication of the Study

- The study implies that periodic compulsory ultimate evaluation of university programmes in Nigeria will increase the quality and standard of Nigeria university education. Since it will provide reliable information on the actual state of the university education and where it stands in a given time.
- It also implies that ultimate evaluation of university programmes will increase the quality of graduates produced by the universities.

It implies that ultimate evaluation of university programmes ensures that functional curriculum of the university which will stand the test of time, in line with local and global employment needs.

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