

Pedagogy and Assessment, the missing link.

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What is learning?

This question always draws a variety of answers from respondents. Ranging from skill - focus to knowledge – focus. However, all respondents are unified in the ideology that Learning is Mastery, proven over time. Mastery being the ability to draw upon knowledge and skill, over a variety of contexts, time and time again.

Learning occurs when one has the ability to draw upon knowledge and skills gained, time and time again, applying them over a variety of contexts. To attain this, pedagogy and assessments must be structured such that students receive knowledge and skills in a way they can understand, remember and most importantly, apply.

As Spencer Thompson puts it ‘As generations pass, simply telling your child “you need to go to school because I say so” is becoming less relevant. Without developing a deep sense of purpose and context as to why they are sitting through chemistry class, it is extremely difficult to motivate the majority of students. Anyone but the type-A students will have a really hard time justifying how learning the way molecular bonds form will help them in real life’. We as educators, must show students that coming to school, is crucial to their future pursuits.

The way a child is taught, plays a huge role in determining if they Learn! It is that simple. Teacher pedagogy and the role of assessments, it huge. Yet, there is not a lot being done to dig into the practical aspects of classroom practice, with respect to assessment and pedagogy. This could be due to enormous significance placed on curriculum implementation in theory.

Pedagogy, as defined by the Collins English Dictionary, *is the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept.*

Analogy: Imagine, an environment where a lot of importance is on the type of vehicle (curriculum) and the modality of driving and navigation of roads is neglected, the results will be impractical to the realities of driving in modern day society. This is the case when there is an over dependence on the one aspect of the **Curriculum – Pedagogy – Assessment** relationship (fig 1)

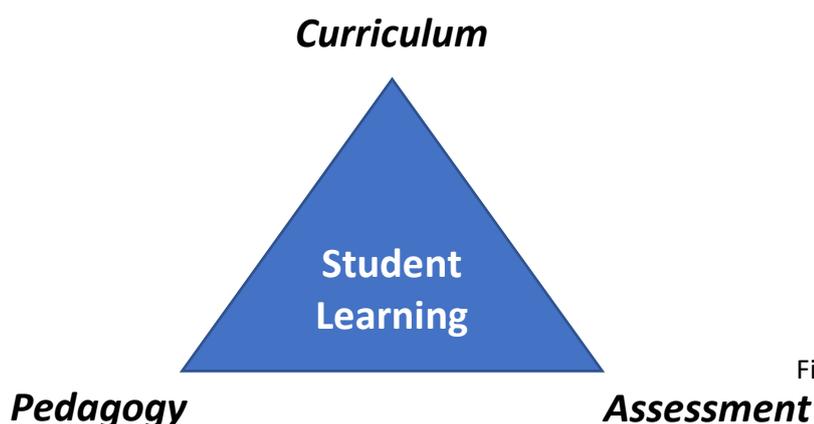


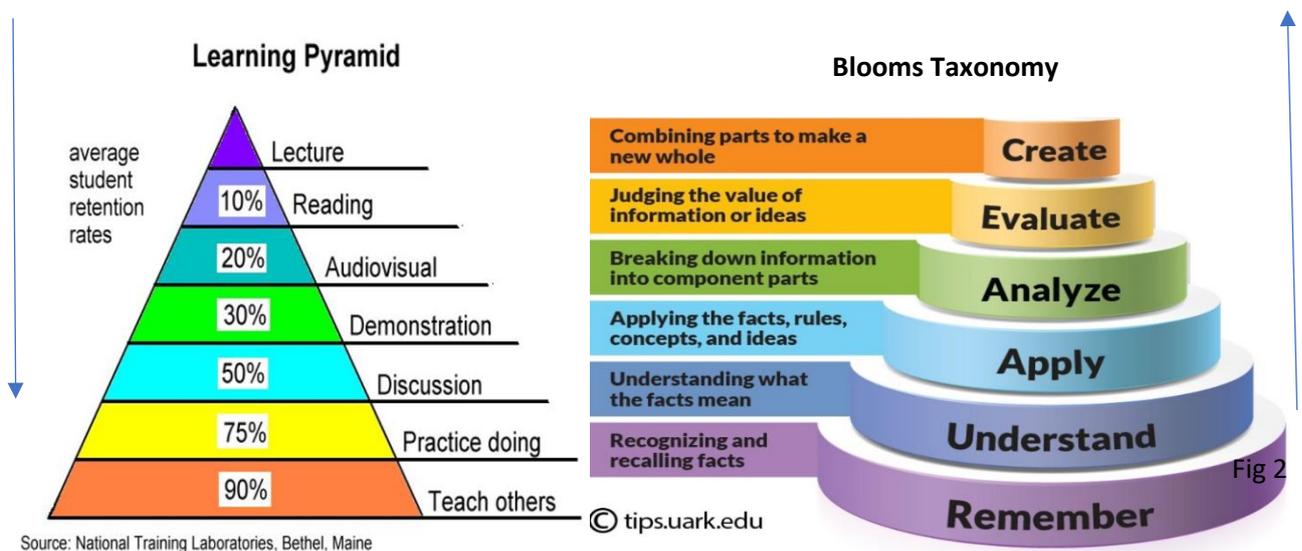
Fig 1

I have often said ‘What is assessed, will determine the focus’. This takes us right back to mastery. If this is the case, why do we see high test scores with no corresponding application of skills? Simple, we are teaching for the test scores.

In our schools, we have placed a huge demand on SCORES to the detriment of actual learning. We have a situation in our educational journey, where ‘teaching for the test’ has become the purpose of the children’s learning. This is counter-productive because, it is not about what the children know, it is about how they use it. This can only be addressed when Assessment and Pedagogy are tuned, right.

In her words, the Deputy Governor, Mrs. Oluranti Adebule of Lagos state and who is also the Commissioner for Education, said: “The importance of the services being rendered by private educational institutions to the socio-economic development of the state and the nation cannot be overemphasised. The number of children in the various private schools are too numerous to be ignored, hence there is the compelling need to redefine the criteria for the delivery of quality education in the state.”

Classroom practice and structure, should follow function. Function in this context is quality education. To start the process on the right footing and ensure, we work children towards mastery, we must find the function. We must define what ‘quality education’ is and we must, as matter of urgency, have a picture of ‘the modality of delivery’ of ‘quality education’.



Assessment has its place and assessments must never be equated with input versus output. It is much more than this. Assessment drives the way pedagogy is delivered, it incorporates student voice and experiences in delivery and it drives reflective practice. Assessment is a vibrant and living part of good classroom practice. Why? As I mentioned earlier, what is being measured, becomes the focus of the thematic units in each subject. Sadly assessment is a section of the Curriculum – Pedagogy – Assessment relationship, that is neglected.

Super imposing the learning pyramid on blooms taxonomy (Fig 2), shows us quite clearly what the focus of classroom practice and assessments should be. It is also shows us what effective classroom practice with respect to pedagogy, should look like.

We often assume that all teachers can assess. They probably can, but are the assessments valid and reliable measures of the learning that is or has taken place? Most times the answer is NO. There is a technique to assessments that facilitates knowledge retrieval in and outside the classroom. As educators, we need to engage this technique.

We need to ask ourselves, 'Do our questions require just remembering or do they prompt the learners to use the upper category of Blooms Taxonomy skills? The Domain of Higher order skills! Hence, how we assess will drive the sustainability and efficacy of the reform efforts in our Education sector.

If we have systems that focus largely, on curriculum implementation with less emphasis on pedagogy and assessments, we have a third of the equation and sadly it is not the third that can stand alone.

Teaching, with the focus on scores as the end goal, is not the blueprint for the delivery of the much sought-after 'quality education' because "**Assessment Drives Pedagogy**". I have often said, "what is being measured, becomes the life of the thematic units in each subject" The scores, not learning in scores absorbed environments, is the motivation.

Hence, delivery of quality education to our children, is tied to Pedagogy and Assessment

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Okeyinfu Ajayi is a certified Assessment Lead and she is an advocate for effective classroom practice. Okeyinfu is the founder of Busy Minds Center Limited, Soundview Consulting and a Facebook group, Teaching Inspirations, and Support Network. She is one of the In-House Consultants for AgeKyndle Education – an educational reform platform. She is the Convener for the PLN Hangout, a platform geared towards supporting female entrepreneurs and educators in Nigeria and beyond. She has extensive experience in coaching and mentoring teachers, parents and young adults in a variety of contexts. She loves to be called a teacher. Partake in her current research at <http://bit.ly/2uySe3v>