WHAT IS PREVENTING TEACHERS FROM ATTAINING ASSESSMENT LITERACY?

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Many researchers have raised concerns that the lack of a correct basic definition of assessment would constrain research on assessment. Even more worrying is that teachers may not have any appropriate working theory to anchor their practices, instigating them to use ad hoc assessment practices. This is distinct especially as the act of assessing, at anytime, is normally a complex and multidimensional process. As such, it is believed that many teachers may be unable to cope with this demanding task; as a result it is likely that students are prevented from acquiring skills such as problem-solving and creative thinking which are much needed skills for them to meet the challenges of the future. However, this situation may be amended if teachers were more assessment literate. This article explains assessment literacy and suggests ways of reducing the gap in assessment literacy among teachers.

Assessment is a systematic, complex, multi-level process involving collection, interpretation and presentation of educational data (National Science Education Standards, 1994). In other words, assessment is the process of observing students where teachers collaborate with them to collect and interpret data pertaining to their interests and preferences (Carter, 2005). A variety of definitions exist for assessment because researchers and practitioners cannot reach a consensus on a common definition that can contain effectively the multiple roles and functions that assessment has (Frey & Sehmitt, 2007; Harlen, 2005). The questions on ‘how’, ‘why’ and ‘when’ the assessment data is collected changes the role of a particular assessment accordingly (McKellar, 2002).

Basis of Definition of Assessment

Many researchers have raised concerns that the lack of a correct basic definition of assessment would constrain research on assessment (Marion,