

Issues and Challenges in Testing and Assessment Practices among Public Schools: Basis for Policy Enhancement

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the issues and challenges of testing and assessment practices among public schools in the Schools Division of Olongapo City as the baseline of policy enhancement. Qualitative research was employed in explaining the issues and challenges of testing and assessment during this new normal. As to methodology, Situational Analysis was used in this study which comprised three phases namely looking inward, looking outward, and looking forward. Data were collected using Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Findings revealed that on testing practices, teachers were assigned additional tasks which could have affected the quality of the test. Learners were also affected by the timeliness of receiving and retrieving modules. Delays of module delivery had also an impact on the testing process including the parents or guardians who had a strong influence on their children's responses which may have affected the validity of the test. The interventions at home and the presumption of copying or cheating have somehow affected the test results. Further, assessment issues also showed learners having difficulty answering the test due to a lack of comprehension, hence, teachers also struggled in grading because the data collected may not be reliable. With such findings, there are issues to be discussed in schools regarding test quality assurance.

The study recommended that the policy may be enhanced by using adjectival ratings because in modular learning modality, reliability and validity are issues. It is also suggested that all students receive one-on-one evaluations at the end of the school year to have a more objective system in grading their learned competencies.

Keywords: Testing, Assessment, Situational Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Classroom assessment is an ongoing process of identifying, gathering, organizing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative information about what learners know and can do. (DepEd order No. 31, s. 2020). It is a vital part of learning that quantifies the learners' performance and achievement based on the desired goals. The data is used to address the gap of learning through interventions in the teaching-learning process. On the other hand, the test is the tangible material that is used in testing or examination.

As stated in the DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015, assessment is a process to trace the progress of learners with regards to learning standards and the development of 21st-century skills. This allows learners to have personal accountability and self-reflection about their own learning. It also serves as a basis in profiling the performance of students based on the learning competencies and curriculum standards. Diverse kinds of assessment are used to cater to diverse learners with unique cultural backgrounds and life experiences.

Testing is an actual examination of learners on the said course of the program. It utilizes the testing materials or instrument intended to measure the knowledge skills and abilities of the learners. It is also the manner of executing the test properly to collect data from the learners.

In a classroom setting, there are always problems and challenges in the implementation of assessment. As published in Chalmers University of Technology (2017), the challenges to sound learning assessment includes having valid and reliable assessment tools based on learning objectives; using appropriate, fair, and adaptive assessment tools that are easily understood by the faculty and students; implementing learning assessment that supports a deeper understanding of concepts and supports active and experiential learning. They are also challenged with the assessment that is appropriate to the learning styles of students and implementing new assessment methods that are committed with time and resources.

As part of the assessment process, when the testing materials are validated the Testing Coordinator works with the faculty and principal to implement assessment protocols and procedures to produce a good response to learners and ensure a conducive testing environment. The manner in how the test is given can also affect the outcome of the test. Retrieval of the testing materials is also important to provide secrecy of the content of the test. After the test has been checked, it is essential to have feedback about the performance of the learners. Teachers can identify what learning competencies they learn most and the least learned skills. Intervention is given to the least learned skills to address the gap of learning. Proper protocols and procedures are followed to promote healthy learning assessment.

Gronlund (2013) noted that if the assessment is not professionally designed or appropriately used, it often produces invalid or unreliable results. If teachers use poor assessment practices, student learning suffers; and as a result, classroom management practices are affected, such as frustration, low motivation, and behavioral problems. The quality of classroom evaluation practices may significantly impact students' achievement and behavior.

The student's academic performance that is valid, accurate, and reliable is essential information to educators, parents, and other stakeholders. The availability of test results are factors to improve instruction, identification of needs of learners, and implement interventions that help students achieve a prominent level of performance. Improper administration and testing irregularities breach the validity of those data to improve student achievement. Unfortunately, there are many high-profile and systemic incidents of cheating in different schools in the country last few years (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

As published by Professional Testing Inc. (2020) to help minimize measurement errors and increase the probability of fair, accurate, and reliable evaluation, test management procedures are created for an analysis program. Specifically, by increasing accuracy and test protection, appropriate standardized procedures enhance measurement. Consistent, systematic assessment management helps you to make straightforward comparisons at various dates between the scores of the examinees, even though the examinees may have taken their exams at different dates at various sites and with various proctors. In addition, for all examinees, administration procedures that ensure the protection of the test help preserve the significance and integrity of the score scale.

Multiple relevant theories about testing and assessment practices have a significant impact in pursuing this study. The study is premised on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligence (1993), Psychological Testing of Anastasi (1997), Blooms Taxonomy (2001), and Theory of Formative Assessment (2009).

According to Howard Gardner (2011), every person has eight comparably independent intelligence. This comprises linguistic intelligence, mathematical-logical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetics, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. A mathematical-logical person is good in numbers, can disclose patterns, excellent in reasoning skills, and think logically. This intelligence. Scientific and mathematical thinking is related to this intelligence. On the other hand, linguistic intelligence is good in language and communications. They enable the acquisition of linguistic skills both in verbal and nonverbal communications. They efficiently express their ideas and opinions through rhetoric and poetic form. When a person effectively creates intellectual images to deal with problems and situations, it pertains to spatial intelligence. This intelligence is not only limited to visual domains as Gardner notes that visually impaired children can also develop it. A musically inclined person must perceive and construct musical rhythms, pitches, and tones. Auditory functions are essential in developing such intelligence to distinguish the tone, pitches, and another musical pattern. Bodily-Kinesthetics Intelligence capacitates intellectual abilities in coordinating bodily movements. An individual can learn most in experiences and actions. This intelligence is deemed to be a challenge that mental and physical activities are separately different. Personal intelligence involves intrapersonal and interpersonal. An intrapersonal intelligent individual is self-smart. They are at best when doing things alone using their feelings and motivation. However, an interpersonal person is people smart. They are sociable and enable themselves to engage with people most of the time. Naturalist intelligence designates a person's ability to single out among living organisms such as plants, animals, and other compositions of the world like clouds, and different landforms. Individuals may differ from one another in their relative strength of intelligence. They can acquire and develop the eight multiple intelligences based on how they nurture their knowledge and skills.

The theory is relevant to the present study in terms of testing and assessment practices. In the process of gathering data on learning experiences, teachers must consider multiple intelligence to develop differentiated learning activities. It promotes no learners left behind since they are allowed to excel in their strengths. In various testing and assessment practices, they are not able to get what is intended to learn, because their assessment is not appropriate to the learners' intelligence. Teachers are focusing on paper-pencil tests which may be limited only to mathematical-logical, and linguistic intelligence.

Psychological Testing (1997) discusses the importance of how to evaluate a psychological test. It answers the question of how to judge a test. What kind of information does it provide and how good is the test? Does it meet the general standards and fit its purpose? The theory also highlighted the norms and interpretation of test scores, reliability and measurement error, validity. It recommends that criterion-referenced tests are the most appropriate to use in readily identifiable basic skills. The main requirement in developing such a test is an accepted domain of knowledge or skills to be assessed. Reliability is also important with the test which means the consistency of performance. It is the consistency of the test scores obtained by the person taking the test when given from different situations, occasions, and examining conditions. Validity also needed to consider which answers the questions what does the test measures? The validity of the test indicates what can be inferred from the test results, and how well the test meets the assessment needs.

The theory of psychological testing is essential in the present study about testing and assessment as it discusses the norms and interpretation of test scores, reliability, and validity. These criteria allow having good test material that enables the teachers to measure the learning of the students that are valid and reliable. Interpretation of scores is also important for the teachers to analyze what enrichment activities and intervention will be given to the learners after finding out the result of the test.

According to the revised Bloom's Taxonomy (2001), knowledge is based on six cognitive processes which include remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The first three levels undergo lower-order thinking skills, and the other three go with higher-order thinking skills. The be verbs of the levels of learning are used in instructional objectives to establish pedagogical interchange. It is used in planning and delivering appropriate instruction, developing valid and reliable assessment tasks, ensures that instruction and assessments are aligned.

The testing and assessment practices among public schools may be the concrete manifestation of the foregoing theory. In the process of testing and assessment, teachers shall finalize the instructional goals and objectives to clarify what is intended to learn. Upon using the recommended be verbs of Bloom's Taxonomy, it is expected that objectives and assessment are aligned. In the testing and assessment process, when the teacher utilizes lower order thinking skills that only cultivates facts and information, a lower retention rate is deemed by the learners. On the contrary, when the teacher imposes high order thinking skills learning goals, then the retention rate of the students is high.

The theory of formative assessment by Black, P., & William, D. (2009) suggested the five main activities in formative assessment strategies such as sharing success with the learners, classroom questioning, comment-only making, peer and self-assessment, formative use of the summative test. Furthermore, they established the three key processes in teaching-learning namely establishing where the learners are in their learning at present, where they are heading or going, and what needs to be done to get them there. This allows both teachers and learners to jointly improve the learning and mitigate the impact of any failures. The theory also identified five key strategies in formative assessment. First, sharing and clarifying learning intentions and criteria for success. Second, conducting classroom discussions and learning tasks that elicit understanding, Third, providing immediate feedback to the learners. Fourth, allowing learners as instructional resources to their learning. And lastly, activating as the owners of their learning.

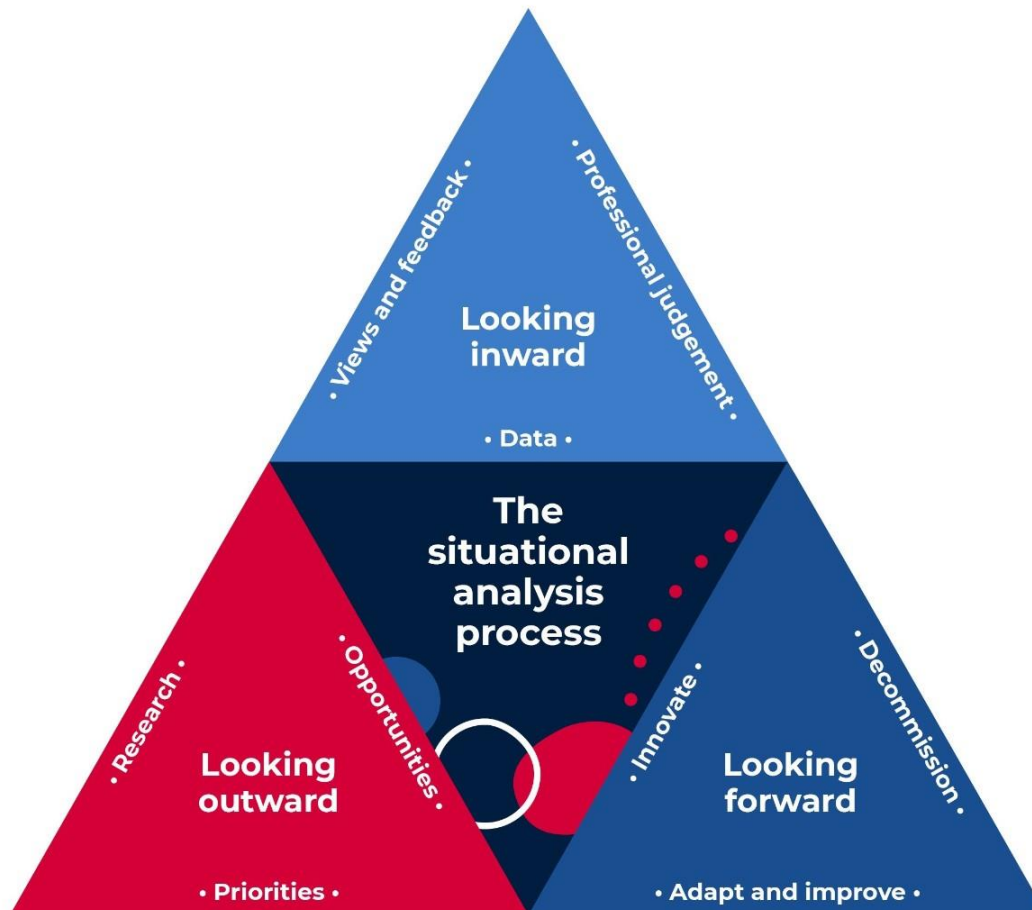
This theory is truly relevant to the present study as it discusses effective strategies and methodologies on how to engage formative assessment in the teaching and learning process. It revolves around the clearer picture of conducting assessment and how to improve the processes. This allows teachers to develop and utilize effective learning tasks that cater to the needs and weaknesses of the learners towards achieving instructional goals. Learners on the same hand can provide satisfactory results because they are taking good assessment tools that are valid and efficient.

The continuing threat of COVID-19 in the country and the world brings about unprecedented challenges to basic education. As the school prepares for the opening, teachers and parents must adapt to alternative learning modalities to ensure that learners achieve essential curricular goals. This requires creative and innovative ways of designing optimal learning experiences and assessing learning progress effectively under adverse circumstances.

This study identified the issues and challenges of testing and assessment practices among public schools as a basis for policy enhancement. Various participants were included such as teachers, master teachers, and principals who are grounded and engaged with testing and assessment in school. Furthermore, thematic approach was used to capture the themes based on the responses of the participants. It is used to analyze the themes based on the narratives generated from the respondents. It focuses on finding, analyzing, and interpreting meaning patterns (or "themes") in qualitative data. This study included the description of testing and assessment practices among public elementary schools, why do these issues arise, and how schools provide solutions to them. It also sought to enhance existing policy to provide solutions to the challenges in testing and assessment. It was limited to large public elementary schools in the division of Olongapo City.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses the segmented pyramid of situational analysis model (NSW Education 2020) in capturing the essence of the issues and challenges in testing and assessment. This employs the steps in situational analysis which is to build on the existing good practices and their weaknesses and look further on other areas which can still be improved after going through the complete cycle.



The illustration shows in the form of a pyramid where variables are interrelated with each other proportionally. The study sought to enhance a policy to address the issues and challenges of testing and assessment practices. It utilized the three process of situational analysis which was looking inward, looking outward, and looking inward. In the first step of *looking inward*, the issues and challenges on the testing and assessment are identified. It is deemed to collect data on the existing experience of teachers/testing coordinators. On the second step of *looking outward*, it desired to analyze the priorities and opportunities based on the existing policy or guidelines in conducting testing and assessment involving teachers and learners. The third step which was *looking forward* that seek to decommission the practices and improve the learning process that takes place in testing and assessment. After which, it was aimed to enhance the practices in testing and assessment to make them more responsive to the needs of teachers and learners. The data were collected through the generative process of journaling and observations, semi-structured interviews, and participant-created documents on the learning process (NSW Education 2020).

To explain the issues and challenges of testing and assessment in the Schools Division of Olongapo City this research used a qualitative research design. Qualitative research was used to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions of the respondents (Creswell, 2013). Preliminary interview was conducted as basis in developing SWOT analysis. Situations were analyzed based on the DepEd Order No. 15 s. 2015 and DepEd Order No. 31. S. 2020 implemented in schools. This study utilized the situational analysis process. It involved three steps which were looking inward, looking outward, and looking forward. Conducting situational analysis enabled the school to develop a rich and highly

contextualized understanding of the current situation. It was the key component of the School Excellence Cycle and were the essential steps in the development of School Improvement were prioritize. It identified the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the process of testing and assessment. In the first steps of *looking inward*, it answered the question "Where are we now". The primary goal was to inquire participants through one-on-one interview of the positive and negative elements and their feedback in an organization especially about issues and challenges encountered in testing and assessment. Life-giving questions were given to generate a response to qualities that were instrumental to future progress. (Allen & Innes, 2013). *Looking outward* attempts to answer the question "Where do we want to be? This allows participants to engage in innovative thinking and collective imagination. These questions encourage the organization to produce a bold vision of the priorities of improvement of what they should become? This step prepared participants and gave an unobstructed vision towards a better future. Values and aspirations from the previous were used. Based on their statements it encourages participants to think about what could be possible. This phase served as the stepping-stone turning the organization's dream into reality. The *looking forward* which was the last step of the study addresses the question How to empower, learn, improvise? During this step, the participants were involved in providing solutions through actions and projects. It also decommissioned the malpractice in testing and assessment. Collaboration was essential to generate the best strategies and practices in an organization (Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2011). On the looking forward step, all participants were gathered in one place to have a simultaneous discussion about the topic using the guide questions. This study was very essential in the Philippine context to allow improvement in testing and assessment scenarios among public schools. This gave hope to schools that needed attention when it comes to the quality, valid, and reliable assessment process. Moreover, utilizing good assessment led to satisfactory results in education. Themes were captured using a thematic approach based on the responses of the participants. It is used to examine themes based on the narratives provided by respondents. Finding, evaluating, and interpreting meaning patterns (or "themes") in qualitative data is the subject of this research.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews of fourteen (14) testing coordinators/master teachers/teachers and three (3) principals, at public schools to gain their insights about their experiences in the testing and assessment process. According to Aksu (2011), the semi-structured interview is an interview in which the interviewer did not strictly follow a formalized list of questions wherein they asked more open-ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewee rather than a straightforward question and answer format. Participant observation also employs to answer the sub-problems. Moreover, this study also employed a Purposive sampling strategy in which the researcher relies on his or her judgment based on the formulated criteria when choosing members of a population to participate in the study Neumann (2014).

This research used semi-structured interview guide questions. It was open-ended where the researcher allows the respondents to spontaneously tell his/her experience based on the guided questions. It was comprised of 5 questions with 4-5 sub-questions each to determine the issues and challenges on the testing and assessment. Part 1 dealt with the issues and challenges of testing in school, and Part II focused on the assessment practices in school. Part III involved the possible recommendation and policy enhancement from the respondents.

The instrument underwent content validation by three experts Master Teacher, Senior Education Program Specialist in Testing, and Education Program Supervisor in Math. They are specialists in the field of thesis writing aligned with testing and assessment. Then, a trial run of the instrument was conducted on 3 public school teachers in which they were not covered by the study. They were not included as actual informants, but it was only used for validation purposes to determine whether the contents of the questionnaire were comprehensible and reliable. Their responses were deemed significant in analyzing issues and challenges on the testing and assessment. SWOT analysis was developed as the basis of the study into engaging situational analysis. It serves as reference to analyzing data through looking inward, looking outward, and looking forward concepts of analysis. This step enables the researchers to have background on how contrived experiences and situations happened in testing and assessment at school.

The researcher visited five (5) participants from the identified school of this study for a one-on-one interview and twelve (12) participants were conducted through the google meet platform. The interview was recorded for proper documentation. Observations were also in place to find out the validity of the research. Which, participant observation was also used wherein it combines the researcher's participation in the lives of the people under the study while also maintaining a professional distance. Furthermore, the purpose of this observation was to find out and be able to describe the socio-cultural context of the experiences in conducting the test and the assessment process. After conducting the one-on-one interview, the researcher conducted a focused group discussion to facilitate more information where respondents were

collaborating on viable solutions based on the arising issues and challenges on the testing and assessment practices found in a one-on-one interview.

This study utilized software in Qualitative research to analyze the data given by the informants. Moreover, the researcher used MAXQDA Qualitative software in analyzing the transcribed data and narratives given by the respondents on the data gathering process. According to Neumann (2013), MAXQDA is a qualitative data analysis computer software package, and it has been designed for qualitative researchers working with extraordinarily rich text-based and/or multimedia information, where deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data are required.

The researcher used varied strategies to ensure the tenacity of the findings. To strengthen the research, the researcher first developed a scheme following the study protocol which included the following: formulation of the questions included in the preliminary interviews, conduct of SWOT analysis, one-on-one interviews, and focus group discussions. Data triangulation of these sources were also used to mitigate the consequences of the sources' flaws. Furthermore, the researcher compared the findings of the study from previous researches conducted for a more critical analytical procedure. The researcher then presented the study's findings to the research adviser and to those who validated the instrument, allowing them to express their insights as additional inputs in the interpretation of data. The researcher utilized the thematic coding criteria, and ensure everything had been captured to represent the verbatim responses of all the respondents.

This study observed an ethical practice of education and in social research. As part of the data gathering process, the researcher prepared interview consent forms to protect the identity and seek permission from the informants if they were willing to be part of the study.

According to Walliman (2014), the Informed Consent Form is used to assure participants that personal, or identification data will be kept confidential and that only aggregated results will be published, or indeed, to obtain their permission to identify them by name or by other characteristics. In addition, informed consent is granted in the knowledge of the possible consequences; in which, participants should have a clear idea of what they are agreeing to between the respondents and the researcher. Permission must be obtained from anybody who provides data for the research project. Moreover, the participants of this research read a description of the study and their part in it, including an enumeration of potential risks and benefits. Also, the researcher discussed this description of this informed consent to the informants. The participants were told that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, irrespective of the reason, without any negative consequences for them.

RESULTS

SWOT ANALYSIS

Generated from the preliminary interview, the SWOT analysis had been undertaken to analyze the present situations in testing and assessment. This served as a basis in using situational analysis from the study. Two (2) teachers, one (1) master teacher, and one (1) principal were interviewed who are excluded as respondents from the study.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Teachers develop assessment tool which aligned to the prescribed MELC. • Contents of the tests were quality assured from the master teacher. • All learners are provided with an equal amount of test materials regardless of modality. • There were sufficient test items appropriate to every grade level.	• Teachers interpret the test which could invalidate the items. • Learners were cramming to meet the deadline of passing the test because of poor time management. • Teachers have limited access to check the background and profile of the learners and level of their understanding. • Learning modules were delayed which affects the assessment.

• A variety of assessments was also considered. • Feedbacking to every teacher was observed to avoiding overlapping of activities	
OPPORTUNITIES • There was recognition every quarter to motivate learners. • Online platforms were used to ensure communications to parents. • Teachers outsource other learning resource material to enhance the assessment tool. • Stakeholders supported through giving printing materials to teachers.	THREATS • The answers of learners may not be reliable since they are influenced either by their parents or the internet sources. • Some learners have the same answers that compromised the reliability of their performance • Teachers were unsure of the consistency of their decisions in giving grades. Adjustments of grades are practiced when this occurs.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The discourses encoded as gathered from the testimonies of the participants provided an actual situation of testing and assessment in the three phases which are depicted in the forthcoming situations. This section relays the information gleaned from the participants' responses, based on the themes discussed with respondents. Following the collection of data from interviews, supplemental questions were employed to discuss the implementation of testing and assessment. Interviews were gathered, taped, copied, and reviewed several times. Each interview question was used to characterize the themes. To validate the findings, these themes were described to the participants. The researcher provided insights through focus group discussion and a consolidated analysis was recorded.

Themes were defined and represented the level of patterned responses and meanings derived from the data. An expert in qualitative research reviewed the coded data to identify themes that formed coherent patterns and made recommendations for further clarification. Thematic categories were then classified as necessary for understanding the phenomena under investigation. This section includes a textual description, which stated the experiences of the participants using verbatim excerpts from the interview and explained the meaning in narrative format to understand the participants' experiences.

Three phases of testing practices and implementation were included based on the situational analysis of 'looking inward', 'looking outward', and 'looking forward'. The fundamental themes were then gathered following the Issues and Challenges of Testing such as the (1) test preparations, (2) test administration and Retrieval, (3) Testing Process. Hence, the issues and challenges of assessments cover (1) Construct Alignment and Relevance, (2) Evidence Regarding Cognitive Process, (3) Reliability of Inferences and Student's Proficiency, and (4) Decisions Consistency and other Experiences.

PHASE I. LOOKING INWARD

The first phase of a situational analysis was looking inward. It describes live experiences and situations in an organization. It could be good or bad experiences among the learners, teachers, and stakeholders. It enables us to realize the arising problems and situations that teachers are currently facing in implementing a program. Identifying the strength

and weaknesses would determine the improving the quality of service to better serve the stakeholders. Their views and feedbacks were gathered to explain the status of the school in its testing and assessment practices.

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The participants of the study show that seventeen (17) informants take part in this research study. Second, their age distribution ranges from 34-63 years old. They are teachers/testing coordinators, master teachers, and principals of public elementary schools. Regarding their positions, six (6) of them are Master teachers, and nine (9) are Teachers I-III, and three (3) of them are Principals. Fourteen (14) participants had served for ten (10) years or more. Three of them have been in service below the 10-year mark. Nine out of 17 respondents have completed academic requirements in Master of Arts, three (3) are already MA graduate and one (1) doctoral graduate, three have MA units, and only one has Baccalaureate Degree as highest educational attainment.

Looking at the situation of the participants within the bounds of the school community clearly captures the emerging issues and challenges confronted in terms of test preparation, test administration/retrieval, testing process, construct alignment relevance, evidence regarding the cognitive process, reliability of inferences about student's mastery and decisions consistency. These indicators picture those participants having qualms and uncertainties within their circle on how to improve the testing and assessment process. Teachers are having difficulties in identifying the strength and weaknesses of the learners due to limited interactions with them. Teachers are also deemed to reschedule the test when having valid reasons from the learners. They also interpret the test to answer the queries of the learners and parents which could affect the validity and reliability of the test. They also give periodic tests at the end of the quarter which is not advised by the Department of Education. They tend to skip learning competencies due to overlapping activities and the delay of modules and learning materials. In grading, teachers are having adjustment on the grades because the data gathered are unreliable due to the influential factors from parents and other resources.

Test preparations became a vital part of ensuring the quality of the test. Test items should be enough to determine the proficiency level of the learners. Each objective has corresponding test items based on the number of days that the lessons were taught. It should also be appropriate for all the learners despite their differences. Capacitating learners would allow growth to the skills they possess. Feedbacking to the teachers would also mean understanding through scrutinizing every content of the lesson. This would avoid overlapping activities and lessons at every level. Despite the situations that seem to be very lax, being prepared for the test would greatly help in the development of learning.

The testing process involving the learners and teachers is vital to assessment. This defines the credibility of the collected data to ensure the reliability of the test. Influential factors and the environment would affect the quality of the data that has been gathered. Constant communication to parents really matters to the success of the test. Allowing learners to answer it independently gave an assurance that the test is credible. Testing materials should also be available and clear to cater to the needs of the learners.

Construct Alignment of the assessment tool guaranteed the efficacy of the test. Test items should be aligned and congruent to the standards given by the Department of Education. Standards and competencies should not be compromised for they are the salient features of the curriculum. Likewise, it should be observed that teachers and learners are meeting such skills and competent enough to proceed to the next level. Using the Table of Specifications is important in ensuring the validity of the test.

Using the HOTS questions should be considered in revitalizing the quality of assessment. Incorporating such skills and the cognitive process denounced that the assessment was consistent with the targeted goals and objective of the test. This would result in the highly competent learners who garnered scores that were full of knowledge and application towards the content of the lesson.

Reliability of the assessment was needed as a basis for judging whether the learners passed, failed, or even exceeded certain competencies. It was essential to determine the qualities of reliable learners. It would be used to infer learners and provide interventions and enrichment upon knowing the knowledge and skills of the students. Unreliable

assessment due to cheating consequent to failure of the test. It would lose its purpose to check the learner's understanding of the test was not reliable.

The teacher served as the evaluator of learning. Being consistent with the decisions was essential. This resulted in showing fairness to our learners. The proper evaluation and consistent judgment of learning skills and abilities provide an impact that learners are progressive. Knowing their basic skills and quantifying their learned concept is already a rewarding experience. Promoting fairness concerning statistical records create a healthy learning environment for the students.

PHASE II. LOOKING OUTWARD

The situation within the school community as regards testing and assessment is further affected by parental support, availability of learning materials and the practices developed when the setting had shifted to the new normal. Issues arise that some parents are not capable to guide the learners due to their educational background. Other parents do not have time to monitor and get the learning materials because of their work. It is also observed that parents themselves are the ones answering the test. Other challenges that happened are the delay in the delivery of the learning materials that compromised the competencies and the coverage of the tests. The proficiency level of the learners is difficult to identify, especially in modular learning. Learning content which needed an application to elicit skills is also difficult to implement since learners and teachers had minimal interactions.

Classroom assessment is a critical aspect of the teaching-learning process. It helps teachers to measure teaching effectiveness with student success according to clear learning goals. Evaluating performance is important because it offers feedback on the degree to which students are effectively achieving the goals of the course. Assessment encourages teachers to think like a curriculum planner which enables them not just to measure the effectiveness but to improve the pedagogy of classroom teaching. Several issues are facing the assessment system that needs to be understood and resolved for improved learning outcomes. The evaluation of students, teachers, educational boards, technology, social and ethical problems may be linked to the challenges. There is a need to better evaluate and difficulty in the evaluation method, Embibe (2020).

According to Agaj (2015), the main purpose of assessment is to improve educational work. In the process of assessment, feedback is needed to assess the teaching activities at the right time. It allows both the teacher and student to learn if they achieve the desired goals. Unfortunately, there is a delay in feedbacking the result and progress of the learners in Kosovo schools nowadays. There are cases where learners do not know what he has learned and not manage to learn because feedback is not given at the right time. As an effect, teachers do not have a clear picture of what topics or content needs intervention, corrective measures, and clear planning based on the result of the assessment. Most serious issues in the process of assessment have been identified such as subjectivity of assessment, insufficient validity of assessment and grading, lack of criteria for grading, and discontinuity of grading. Only certain components of what is described as the object of evaluation and grading are included during the evaluation and grading, while the others are partially included or fully ignored.

A balanced approach in student assessment is developed based on mixed classroom assessment and central or national examinations. The assessment aims to enhance teaching and learning which gained prominence both in policy and practice. Teachers hold responsibility both in formative and summative assessment. The Directorate for Education and Training implement rules and regulations as a measure to increase competence and promote fairness relevant to the assessment. It is also mandated to improve the system in documenting assessment. However, learning expectations and performance lack clear criteria and exemplars resulting in various levels of performance. There are implications that schools and teachers vary in implementing assessment, grading, and reporting which raises concern in fairness and consistency of the teacher-made test.

According to Singh (2014), issues on classroom assessment includes appropriateness between learning outcomes and assessment, lack of transparency in the assessment system, feedback to the assessed work is missing, minimal use of authentic assessment, classroom assessment techniques are rare, no involvement of the student in the assessment process, most of the system is based on marks, lesser stress in formative assessment which results to less focus on improving learning in a continuous basis. The issues and challenges need to be addressed with regards to improving assessment.

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The main challenges of classroom assessments include a variety of contexts in developing test and performance measures, grading, and utilizing assessment results in decision making. The teachers need to understand the strength and weaknesses of the assessment methods they are using. They should use the right formats to assess the learner's achievement. Test items should have content validity. It must develop the higher-order-thinking skills of the students. Imposing clearly defined performance standards can improve the reliability and validity of the performance assessment. Using descriptive rubrics can also help in evaluating performances. It is also necessary to have revisions on teacher-made tests based on the item analysis, Lasaten R.C. (2016).

The illustration below shows the representations of testing assessment practices pre-pandemically and this new normal. It shows how the implementations have been adjusted to continue learning despite of the circumstances this pandemic. Below are some of the differences between testing and assessment from the pre-pandemic to the new normal. Other provisions from DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015 not mentioned in DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2020 remained in place and existing.

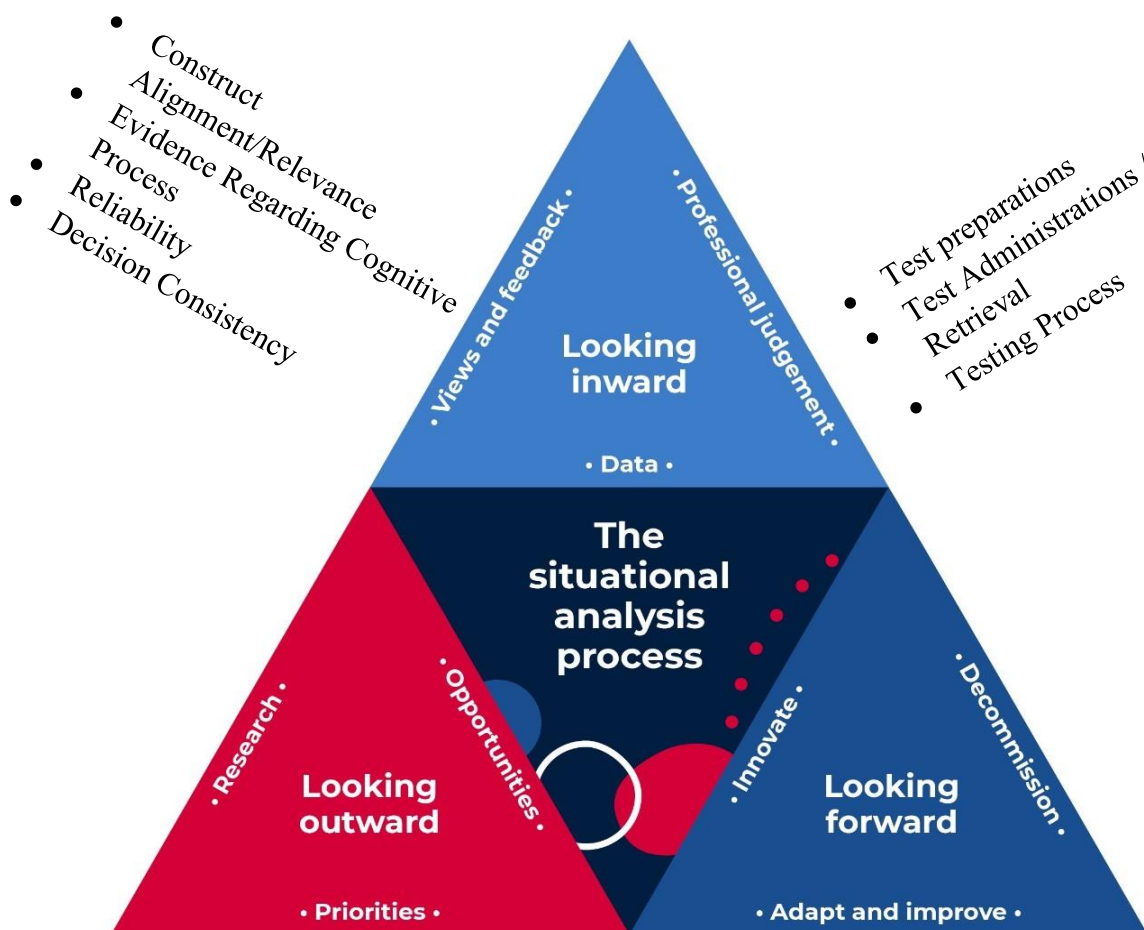
Pre-Pandemic <i>(DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015)</i>	New-Normal <i>(DepEd Order No.31, s. 2020)</i>
• K-12 curriculum standards were followed in the teaching-learning process and assessment. • Three bases of grading were used namely written works, performance tasks, and quarterly assessment. • No required number of written works and perform tasks with one quarterly exam every quarter. • The final grade of at least 75 in all learning areas will be promoted to the next level. • Face-to-face testing and assessment were used to evaluate learning. • Recognition of learners was given from Kinder to Grade 12 such as academic and special awards.	• Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) are used in the assessment. • Written Works and Performance tasks were the basis in computing the grades. No quarterly exam was given. • Minimum of 4 written works and 4 performance tasks were required within the quarter. • The same policy is in place. • Modular, Online, Digital learning modalities were used to have flexible assessment practices. • Only academic awards are given to graduating students in grades 6 and 12.

PHASE III. LOOKING FORWARD

Upon comprehending the testing and assessment in the new normal setting in public schools, these are what the participants desire; this situation will remain in the next school year. There are areas of improvement they identified particularly in profiling learners aside from grouping them according to learning modality, ease in the integration of

MELCs, and availability of modules always. In terms of enhancing the policy, among the suggestions that surfaced is to have better quality assurance in test construction by having trainings. Adjectival ratings are also recommended to easily identify learners whether they passed or failed in their grade level. Since the results of the test and performance may have reliability issues it would help teachers make judgments about the capability of the learners. Nationwide consultations to teachers in every area are also suggested to allow smooth communications and understanding of the implementations in this new normal mode of teaching and learning.

NEW NORMAL	SUGGESTION FOR POLICY ENHANCEMENT
• The 'Most Essential Learning Competencies' (MELC) is used in the assessment. • Written Works and Performance tasks is the basis in computing the grades. No quarterly exam is given. • Minimum of four written works and four performance tasks within the quarter • Modular, Online, Digital learning modalities are used to have flexible assessment practices.	• Extensive profiling of learners to cater to their needs according to their chosen learning modality • Re-visitation of Learning Competencies to continuously adapt to the changes of the new normal • Ensure analysis of test results to identify existing gaps in learning • Utilization of adjectival ratings in grading the performance of the learners.



Only academic awards are given to graduating students in grades 6 and 12.	Identify the best practices in testing and assessment in the new normal as basis for crafting policy enhancement
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Issues and Challenges of Testing Practices

- Parental Support
- Learning Materials

Issues and Challenges of Assessment

- Capacity to Answer
- Reliability

- Areas of Improvement
- Policy Enhancement

Premised on the above discourses, the following are the generated responses which are coded to have a glimpse of what transpired in the three phases. The illustration presents the gist of the scenario followed by concise textual elaboration.

The following are the significant findings of the study:

1. On Testing and Assessment:

The answers to the test maybe highly influenced by parents. Some parents were not capable of guiding, facilitating, and supporting their children due to constraint educational backgrounds. On the positive side, the test itself was valid for it is aligned with the Most Essential Learning competencies but the results gathered may not be totally reliable. The data being collected such as scores may not fully reflect the performance of the learners. There was no assurance that learners really answered test on their own.

2. On Teachers :

Teachers have issues with regards to parental support and learning backgrounds of students including the added tasks in terms of implementing assessment in the new normal. Teachers had to devise all means to explain the content of the test even if it was meant to measure the actual outcome of learning. The teacher gave summative tests only once every quarter from the beginning to the end of the unit. Teachers struggled in grading since the data being collected may not be reliable. Estimating of grades and performance of the learners

3. On Parents and Learners

Some parents and learners have challenges in understanding the content of the modules as well as the assessment activities . They have limited technological devices to engage in online tests and instruction. Learners have issues in terms of timeliness in getting and submitting outputs and some of them really need mentoring. They have a low retention rate due to challenges with reading comprehension. Most of them passed the assessment because of consistent communications and considerations of teachers.

4. On Policy Enhancement

. Teachers should have individual profiling of learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses to develop appropriate assessment tools. Learning standards should be unpacked and related to the next competencies to have ease in classroom delivery. Adjectival Rating is encouraged in grading the learners to be more objective in judging students' learned competencies. Consultations with teachers were encouraged before implementing new policies. Analyzing test results would determine the capacity and ability of learners to the lessons in every learning area. Providing interventions to the least learnt skills is highly advisable.

DISCUSSION

Most of the participants were falling on the age bracket of 40-49, female, and have positions as teacher I-III. Most of them were MA CAR level and have been serving as testing coordinators for 2 to 5 years. Issues in Testing practices involved teachers having added tasks in terms of assessment while learners with timeliness in getting and retrieving the modules and tests. These issues affected quality assurance of the test which schools need to resolve.

Challenges in Testing involves limited technological device to engage in online instruction. Answers were highly influenced by parents or guardians. Some parents were also not capable of guiding the students because of their educational background. The delayed delivery of modules also affects the testing process. Tests were valid but the scores may not be reliable.

Issues in Assessment include parental support in the assessment process. Learners had difficulty answering the test because of poor comprehension. The data being collected may not have reflected the performance of the learners. Teachers' interpretations of results may have sacrificed the validity. Tests were also given only once every quarter.

Challenges in Assessment covers inability of learners to finish all learning competencies. Teachers also struggled in grading since the data being collected may not be reliable. Answers maybe highly influenced by parents and the presumption of copying is possible. Most of the learners were given passing grade provided outputs were submitted as evidence of learning.

Policy enhancement focuses on the individual profiling of the learners to allow teachers to identify their backgrounds and needs to address them properly. Learning competencies should also be unpacked to check how they are related to meet the desired expectations for the learners including the timely delivery of modules. In grading, adjectival ratings were suggested to have more room for objectivity since the data collected may have reliability issues. Consultations to teachers before implementing new policies and provision of one is to one learning materials to all learners were highly encouraged. Home visitations were practiced to follow-up and provide remediations to learners having difficulty of the lessons.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and standards of testing and assessment, per DepEd order No. 31, s. 2020, recommendation are given for policy enhancement. Teachers should unpack learning competencies to ensure that they matched the level of capability of the learners. Alignment to the content standards and competencies should not be compromised. Test administration should be given with utmost monitoring to learners to ensure the validity and accuracy of the test and not influenced by parents, peers, the internet, and other platforms. Teachers should enhance and utilize interactive platforms such as Microsoft teams, Google forms, kahoot.com, quizzz.com, mentimeter.com, etc. It allows them to generate reliable responses in a timely manner. Engage and utilized differentiated formative assessment activities to foster proficiency towards the end of the quarter based on the needs of every learner in the new normal. The decisions upon giving grades should have a clear policy based on the answers, performance and evidence gathered. Coordination to parents was highly recommended to track and monitor the learning progress of the learners. The Policy enhancement recommended from the study is the use of adjectival ratings since most of the learners belong to modular learning modality where reliability and accuracy are issues. It is also suggested to have a one-on-one evaluation for all the learners to have a more objective grading of their capabilities at the end of the school year.

DECLARATION

<i>Title of the Study:</i> ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN TESTING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AMONG PUBLIC SCHOOLS: BASIS FOR POLICY ENHANCEMENT			
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Purpose: Completion of this form is made because of the researcher's intent in publication purposes in *Gallantry Journal*. Thus, it adheres to ethical standards and procedures, research funding and support, authors contribution, and consent for publication.

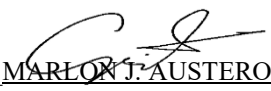
.....

With regards to my research study entitled "ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN TESTING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AMONG PUBLIC SCHOOLS: BASIS FOR POLICY ENHANCEMENT." I have the following disclosure to report:

1. The said study adheres to ethical standards thus references were cited and permitted to use information for the benefit of the study;
2. There is no research funding and support given from different organizations aside from the personal fund utilized by the researcher;
3. I am the sole author of the said study; and
4. I give my full authority and consent to the Gallantry for possible publication of the study.

.....

I hereby confirm that the above-cited disclosure is complete and correct, to the best of my knowledge and belief. I will not be involved in the debate and decision making on this matter and protocols will be seen. I agree that if I become aware of any information which may show that this disclosure is inaccurate. Any false or fictitious statements may subject me to criminal or administrative penalties.


MARLON J. AUSTERO
Signature Over Printed Name

9/27/2020
Date Signed

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