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Assessment for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning of Christian Religious Knowledge in Secondary Schools in Awgu Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

For the achievement of planned educational goal, there must be a continuous planned process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about the performance of students. Education process always device a way of generating and collecting evidence of achievement, evaluating this evidence, recording the findings and using this information to understand and assist the student's development in order to improve the process of learning and teaching. Assessment is thus a vital aspect of any education process. Therefore this paper, "Assessment for the improvement of Teaching and Learning of Christian Religious Education in Secondary School in Awgu Educational zone of Enugu State, Nigeria, has the purpose of determining the roles assessment in improvement of students' learning of Religious Education in Awgu Educational Zone of Enugu State Nigeria. The specific objectives were: to determine the extent the teachers have used assessment to improve students' learning of Religious Education and to determine how assessment has helped students to improve in their performance in Religious Studies. The research employed a survey plan. Questionnaire was used in the collection of data. The stratified random sampling were used to select the schools while sample random sampling was used to select the subjects. The number of respondents used were five hundred (500) comprising two hundred (200) teachers and three (300) students. Weighted mean and standard deviation was used in data analysis. The findings of the study include that through assessment: teachers make judgement about how students are doing in religious studies, provide guidelines which help students to improve in their knowledge, understanding and skill in the subject. The research also established that through assessment: students identify relevant information to the questionnaire and assignment; recall relevant information in religious education and express it in a coherent form and link different elements of religious curriculum in their studies. The study recommends constant assessment of the aims and learning outcome of the students' to identify essential learning. Keywords. Assessment, Teaching and Learning, Christian Religious Knowledge, Education, Enugu State

Introduction

One fundamental aspect of the educational process is to obtain information through some devices to evaluate a student's over-all progress towards some predetermined goals or objectives. At any point in teaching and learning process, a conscientious attempt must be made to provide both quantitative and qualitative judgement on the learner's progress. This required information on the student's progress towards the pre-determined goals, especially in Religious education, this can only be obtained through assessment. Assessment is thus an integral part of the educational process. Its aims include fostering learning, improving, teaching, and providing information on the education system or the society at large. It gives opportunities for evaluation of curricula and for students and for the certification of achievement. It is through proper assessment that valid certification of the student's can be achieved. Certification through assessment brings about in the students at secondary school level provides also information on decision that may be taken with regard to pathways at tertiary level. Indispensable role of assessment is also seen in providing feedback for students on the quality of their learning and understanding. These roles made assessment a relevant topic for study.

Meaning of Assessment

Assessment, according to Sinclair (1992), is the consideration and judgement of someone. Gearhart and Gearhart (1990) define it as a process involving the systematic collection and interpretation of wider variety of information on which to base instructional intervention and placement decision. In other words, they consider assessment as a process of evaluating the strength and deficits with necessary of classifying or labeling to provide a base for efficiency. Assessment must be done using methods or tests that are racially or culturally discriminatory. Test must be reliable and valid for the purpose for which they are used. Three techniques of assessment are identified by Awotua – Efebo (2001) as observation, question and discussion. Edikpa (2008) sees assessment as the process of measuring the level of performance of an individual in particular areas or field or endeavour. Hence, assessment in this study will serve as a tool for measuring the level of student's performance

in religious education.

The Principles of quality assessment on Religious Education

The assessments for the student's improvement of learning of Religious Education in secondary school follows the same general principles of quality educational assessment which according to curriculum on line (2010) include that:

- Assessment should be used as a continuous part of the teaching learning process involving students, wherever possible, as well as teachers in identifying next steps.
- Assessment for any purpose should improve learning by exerting a positive force on the curriculum at all levels. It must, therefore reflect the full range of curriculum goals;
- Assessment should provide an effective basis for communication with parents and the other partners in the learning enterprise in a way that helps them to support student's learning.
- The most valuable assessment takes place at the site of learning.
- A valid assessment of educational achievement must clearly reflect all the elements cognitive and affective that is claims to evaluate, and those elements will be identified with the substance of the curriculum that has been followed.
- The choice of different assessment procedures should be decided on the basis of the purpose for which the assessment is being undertaken. This may well mean employing different technique for formative, diagnostic and certification purposes.
- Assessment must be both valid and reliable. The aspects of assessment are particularly relevant for national assessment for the purpose of reporting to parents.
- Assessment that is equitable will provide a range of indicators that will offer the students multiple opportunities to achieve.

The Religious Education online (2010) limited these principles on the assessment of Religious Education to three, and thus asserts that assessment of student must:

- Make reliable judgement about how students are doing in Religious Education, where appropriate in relation to a set standards;
- Provide the guidelines on helping students to see what attitudes are needed for success in Religious Education;
- Providing the guidelines on helping students improving their knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject.

In planning for assessment in religious education regards must be had for the principles of quality assessment outlined above. Okeke (2009) adds that proposals for the assessment of religious education for student's performance improvement draw on the experiences of assessment in other subject areas as well as current research and insights into the nature of thinking and understanding and the role of assessment in the promoting of learning and teaching. However, the teachers of religious education currently use a range of formal and informal modes and techniques of assessment for feedback, evaluation and planning purposes, (Curriculum online 2010). Some schools through assessment include information on performance and achievement in religious education in their reporting and feedback arrangement for parents. In whatever way, curriculum online (2010) insists that any planning assessment arrangements for religious education for performance improvement of students must focus on:

- Linking of modes and techniques of assessment to aims of the syllabus. The aims are broad and refer to a variety of broad outcomes; the modes and techniques for the assessment of the syllabus should reflect the same pattern.
- Structuring the assessment around stated objective. The specific objective for each part of the syllabus should guide the design of the assessment procedures.
- Assessment that has a positive effect on teaching and learning. The assessment procedure adopted should support the use of a variety of approaches to the teaching and learning.
- Assessment that is valid and reliable. The assessment procedures will have to reflect the aims of the syllabus and have the reliability and credibility required for certification purposes.
- Assessment that is equitable. Students should be afforded a range of opportunities to achieve to their full potentials.

A vital element of assessment in Religious education, according to Religious Education online (2010) is to ensure that it is consistent with the focus for the above planning. The planning should also find ways of rewarding positive attitudes being shown by the students. Without a positive attitude, it is unlikely that students will make much progress. The planning should also include the assessment of how well the students have done in relation to some focused objectives.

The Content of Religious Education Assessment in Secondary School Level.

The assessment of religious education for the improvement of the students should cut across the three domains of learning, viz the cognitive, affective and psychomotor. NTI (2012) regrets that for many years until recently, assessment in schools was limited to paper and pen only. That is, testing student's cognitive learning with little or no emphasis on the affective and psychomotor learning. To correct this abnormal, the National policy on Education (NPE, 2004) states that attitudes, values, physical skills and abilities are important for the students as well as cognitive skills. This means that the assessment of cognitive achievement of students should relate to students' knowledge and understanding on the subject. Assessment on affective domain should relate to students' behavior, attitude, values or emotion. In the psychomotor, the focus should be on measuring of the extent to which students are able to apply the skills which they have acquired, for instance, have the students acquired the ability to pronounce correctly, dress properly, sing, etc, through their learning of Religious Education. The curriculum online represents the framework for the assessment of these learning outcomes thus:

	Knowledge	Understanding	Skills	Attitudes
1	Key terms, definitions, descriptions	Understanding of variety of religious and non religious interpretations of life.	Analysis application and synthesis.	
2	Accuracy and adequacy of information.	Key concepts and their application in variety contexts.	Comparison and contrast.	Awareness of and respect for richness of religious tradition.
3	Depth of knowledge appropriate to level.	Understanding of the link between beliefs and practice	Discerning evidence of religious belief.	Awareness of non- religious interpretation of life.
4	Evidence of research and reflection	Awareness of the interplay between the physical emotional, spiritual, intellectual, moral and social aspect of human experience.	Identification of causes and consequences.	Openness to individual and collective search for meaning.
5	Indicatingtheinterrelatednessofdifferent topicsoncourse	Awareness of the variety of ways in which religious beliefs are expressed.	Appropriate used of and critical reflection on texts and resources.	Openness to dialogue and the search for mutual understanding.

Ways of Assessing Religious Education in the Secondary Schools.

In the Religious Education assessment, the curriculum online (2010) states that students at secondary school are expected to:

- Identify information relevant to the question/assignment;
- recall relevant information and express it in a coherent form;
- relate given information to other information and draw conclusion;
- express relevant opinions supported by appropriate evidence;
- link different elements of the course;
- identify and label characteristic in familiar contexts;
- describe problems, purpose, solution and evaluate solution;
- differentiate between disparate elements.

These tasks of students show that the assessment of Religious Education in secondary schools based on the objectives relating to the assessment of the student's knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes which are already outlined above. If the students can perform the above tasks, you know that objectives of teaching and learning of religious education have been? On the above set tasks, different assessments have to be carried out.

Types of Religious education Assessment.

Assessment of Religious education in secondary schools can be achieved through the following types of assessment, viz: Assessment for learning; Assessment as learning, and Assessment of learning. These varied ways of assessment are briefly discussed piecemeal.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning provides information to differentiate and adjust teaching and learning activities (CCC, 2010). QCA and the Assessment Reform Group (2001) see assessment for learning as gathering and interpreting evidence about students' learning and their using of that evidence to decide where students in their learning are

going and how to take the next steps. According to Black and William (1998), students should be trained in selfassessment so that they can understand the main purpose of their learning and thereby grasp what they need to do to achieve these. What to do in order to achieve these is embedded in the teaching and learning process of which assessment is an essential part. QCA (2001) identified other key features of assessment for learning as:

- sharing learning goals with students;
- helping students to know and to recognize the standards to aim for;
- providing feedback which leads students to identify what they should do next to improve;
- having commitment that every student can improve;
- involving both teachers and students in reviewing and reflecting on students performance and progress;
- involving students in self-assessment.

Assessment as Learning

Assessment as learning is a process for developing and supporting Meta cognition for students. It focuses on the role of student as the critical connector between assessment and learning. Though, the reflection opportunities in the units in the religious education programme provide opportunities for students' assessment, but they need to include clearly defined criteria and effective question for guiding students thinking in order to achieve their learning (CC, 201).

Assessment of Learning (Evaluation)

According to Catholic Curriculum Corporation (2001), this is summative in nature and is used to confirm what students know and can do, and to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the curriculum expectations. Teachers' concentration here is ensuring that they use assessment to provide accurate and sound statements of student's proficiency. Teachers are required to evaluate and report students' progress or achievement in religious education programme, that is, their knowledge and understanding, skills and values and attitude which reflect both curriculum expectations and learning skills.

For the assessment methods for assessment for learning, Offsted (2003) recommends the following:

- providing feedback on aspects of learning through marking, questioning of individuals and plenary session;
- listening and responding to student's encouraging and, where appropriate, praising them;
- recognizing and handling misconceptions, building on students response and steering them towards clearer understanding, for example, by helping them to apply new learning to different situations;
- encouraging students to judge the success of their own work and setting targets for improvement;
- regularly sharing information about students' need and achievements with parents/careers;
- taking full account of the target set out in individual education plans for students with special education need.

Any valid assessment on religious education must reflect – these three levels of assessments. Through these different levels of assessment, Ofsted (2003) adjudged that assessment can be judged to be "very good or excellent" where students are enabled to play a very strong part in making and recognizing improvement in their own work.

Statement of the Research Problem

The assessment of religious education by many teachers has been limited only to paper and pen only. That is, testing students only on cognitive with little or no emphasis on the other domains of learning. But, assessment in religious education suppose to be all inclusive as National Policy Education (NPE, 2004) points out that attitudes, values, physical skills and abilities are important for the students. The assessment of only cognitive domain divorces knowledge and understanding, from attitudes and values, and skills.

There are also some educational environments where there exists no assessment at all. This can be seen in the lesson centres around the city, where teachers are concerned with only teaching without assessing the learning outcome of their student. In these learning centres there is no establishment of learning goals/objectives. The teachers do not outline the knowledge, and skills, and values and attitudes which form the learning for each class. They do not provide for the students descriptive feedback that would guide their efforts towards improvement. There is no measure to confirm what students know and can do, and to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the curriculum expectation. This neglect of assessment in a learning circle has left students in doubt of their ability and lack of confidence on themselves. These led them to examination malpractice and poor performance in their examinations. The teachers because of neglect of assessment have failed to detect when "the end has become a failure". Based on these Lacunas, the Catholic curriculum Corporation (2012) asserts that assessment is needed in any teaching and learning circle, to provide opportunities for students self assessment and guiding their thinking on order to achieve their learning goals, and for teachers to provide accurate and sound statements on their student's proficiency.

Purpose of the Study

The study set out to determine the roles of assessment in improvement of students' learning of Religious education in Awgu education zone of Enugu State. Specifically the study had the following objectives.

- i. To determine the extent the teachers have used assessment to improve students' learning of Religious education;
- ii. To determine how assessment has helped students to improve in their performance in Religious education.

Significance of the Study

Decision making generally is informed by this research findings. In respect therefore, the finding of the study will aid decision and policy making in respect of students religious learning in Awgu educational zone of Enugu State.

The findings of the study will also aid the curriculum formulators and innovators to know the adjustments to make in religious education curriculum.

The findings will aid the students to know how to embark in self-assessment to determine their proficiency in Religious education.

Research questions

- 1. What is the extent of teachers use of assessment to improve students' learning of Religious education in Awgu educational zone?
- 2. What extent has assessment helped students to improve their performance in Religious Education learning in Secondary Schools in Awgu Educational zone?

Methodology

Research Design

The survey design was adopted. This method was used because according to Gilbert (1994), it involves the assessment of public opinions, beliefs, attitudes, motivations and behavior using the questionnaire method.

Area of the Study and Population

The study was carried out in secondary schools in Awgu Education Zone of Enugu State. The Educational zone has three Local Government Areas with a total of thirty two (32) secondary schools. The population consists of one thousand, nine hundred and twenty (1,920) teachers and thirty one, thousand, two hundred seventy three (31, 273) students.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Proportional stratified random sampling techniques was used to select 10 schools out of 32 secondary schools in the zone. Random sampling techniques was used to select twenty (20) teachers from each of the schools, making total of two hundred (200) teachers and thirty (30) students from each selected school giving the number to three hundred (300) students. The total subject used for the study is two hundred (200) teachers and three hundred (300) students. Each group of the respondents responded to the questionnaire designed for them.

S/n	Local Govt. Area	No. of	No. of	No. of	No. of	No. of	Number of
		Schools	School	Teachers	Teachers	students	Students
			Selected		Selected		Selected
1	Awgu L.G. A.	14	5	840	100	13,682	150
2.	Aninri L. G. A.	8	2	480	40	7,818	60
3	Oji River	10	3	600	60	9,773	90
	Grand total	32	10	1,920	200	31,772	300

Table I: Number of schools, teachers and student used for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used was a questionnaire called Assessment for the Improvement of teaching and learning of Religious Education Questionnaire (AILREQ). The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher and was face validated by expert in measurement and evaluation, while the content validation was done by an expert in religion. The questionnaire has two sections. Section A sought to obtain the respondents view on the role of teacher in assessment for improving the learning in religious education. Section B was targeted to catch information on the extent assessment has helped students to improve their performance in religious education. The questionnaire was built on likert type scale rating of Strongly Agree – 4 points, Agree – 3 points, strongly Disagree – 2 points and Disagree – 1 point.

A test retest approach was used in a pilot testing of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered on 50 teachers who were excluded from 200 respondents who were eventually used for the study. Correlation was used to establish the reliability of the instrument and co-efficient of 0.81 was achieved. The statistical instrument of mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the data collected. Since the research was on 4points rating scale of 4,3,2,1, a weighted score less than 2.50 was rejected while any weighted score 2.50 and above was accepted.

Table: Field date table

	Section A				
S/n	Items	SA	Α	SD	D
	Topical Issues				
1	Teachers make reliable judgement about how students are doing in Religious Education.	121	63	14	2
2	Teachers provide the guideline on helping students to see what attitudes are needed for success in Religious Education.	133	58	8	1
3	Teachers provide guideline helping students improve on their knowledge and skill in the subject	107	72	15	6
4	Teachers use assessment as a continuous part of the teaching and learning process of Religious Education.	119	71	8	2
5	Teachers use assessment to improve learning by exerting a positive force on the curriculum.	127	66	7	0
6	Teachers use assessment as means of providing an effective basis for communication.	109	70	16	5
7	Teachers use assessment to evaluate clearly reflects the cognitive and effective domains achievement.	103	82	14	1
8	Teachers use assessment to offer students multiple opportunities to achieve.	92	88	12	8
9	Teachers use assessment to achieve proper certification of students in Religious Education.		60	7	2
10	Feachers structure the assessment around the stated objectives.		75	19	5
11	Teachers adopt assessment procedures that support the use of variety of approaches to teaching and learning of Religion.	101 86	79	25	10
12	Teachers provide feedback which leads students to identify what they should so next to improve	122	67	10	1
	Section B				
S/n	Items	SA	Α	SD	D
1	Topical Issues in the teaching and learning: Students identify information, relevant to the question/assignments in Religious Education.	106	115	60	19
2	Students recall relevant information in Religious Education and express it in a coherent form.	128	97	60	5
3	Students relate given information to other information in Religious Education and draw conclusions.	132	101	47	20
4	Students express relevant opinions in Religious Education supported by appropriate evidence.	20	106	61	13
5	Students link different element of Religious Education curriculum.	137	122	31	8
6	Students identify and label characteristics in familiar contexts in Religious Education.	70	83	81	66
7	Students read and comprehend relevant materials in Religious Education.		113	28	10
8	Students describe problems, propose solutions and evaluate solution in Religious education.	107	111	72	9
9	Students differentiate disparate elements in Religious Education.	69	73	96	68
10	Students judge the success of their own work and set targets for improvement in Religious Education.	97	103	59	41
11	Students involve themselves in self assessment	127	106	57	20
12	Students help in their peer assessment in Religious Education.			99	55

Section A

Question 1

What is the extent of teachers' use of assessment to improve their teaching and students' learning of Religious Education in secondary school in Awgu Educational Zone.

Table 3: Means Responses on teachers' use of assessment to improve teaching and learning

S/n	Items	SA	Α	D	SD	Mean	SD	decision
	Teachers-							
1	make Judegment about how students are doing in Religious Education.	484	189	28	2	3.52	1.87	Agreed
2	provide the guideline on helping students to see what attitudes are needed for success in Religious Education.	532	174	6	1	3.62	1.88	Agreed
3	provide guideline helping students' improvement of their knowledge and skill in the subject	428	216	30	6	3.40	1.92	Agreed
4	use assess as a continuous part of the teaching and learning process of Religious Education.	476	213	16	2	3.52	1.87	Agreed
5	use assessment to improve learning by exerting a positive force on the curriculum of Religious Education at Secondary Schools.	508	198	14	0	3.60	1.88	Agreed
6	use assessment as means of providing an effective basis for communication.	436	210	32	5	3.42	1.90	Agreed
7	clearly reflects the cognitive and effective domains achievement of the students in Religious Education.	412	246	28	1	3.44	1.75	Agreed
8	offer students multiple opportunities to achieve.	368	264	24	8	3.32	1.82	Agreed
9	achieve proper certification of students in Religious Education.	524	180	14	2	3.60	1.88	Agreed
10	structure the assessment around the stated objectives.	404	225	38	5	3.36	1.66	Agreed
11	adopt assessment procedures that support the use of approaches to teaching and learning.	344	237	50	10	3.21	1.79	Agreed
12	provide feedback which leads students to identify what they should so next to improve in Religious Education.	488	201	20	1	3.55	1.87	Agreed

Data Source: Section A in the field data was weighted to determine significance, level of significance 2.50.

From the analysis of data in respect of research question one in Table 3, it shows that all the items consisting the cluster met the acceptance criteria mean of 2.50 and above on the four point rating scale.

Section B.

Research Question 2:

What extent has assessment helped students to improve their performance in Religious Education learning in secondary school in Awgu Educational Zone, Enugu State.

Table 4: Mean responses on the help of assessment to students in their performance on Religious Education.

S/n	Items	SA	Α	D	SD	Mean	SD	decision
	Assessment in Religious Education helps student to:	425	345	120	19	3.03	175	agreed
1	identify information, relevant to the question/assignments in	425	345	120	19	3.03	1.74	Agreed
	Religious Education.							
2	recall relevant information in Religious Education and express	512	291	120	15	3.13	1.93	Agreed
	it in a coherent form.							
3	relate given information to other information in Religious	528	303	94	20	3.15	1.93	Agreed
	Education and draw conclusions.							
4	express relevant opinions supported by appropriate evidence in	480	318	122	13	3.11	1.76	Agreed
	Religious Education.							
5	link different element of Religious Education curriculum.	548	372	62	8	3.30	1.63	Agreed
6	identify and label characteristics in familiar contexts in	280	249	194	66	2.63	1.61	Agreed
	Religious Education.							
7	read and comprehend relevant materials in Religious	556	339	56	10	3.20	1.79	Agreed
	Education.							
8	describe problems, propose solutions and evaluate solution in	428	333	144	0	3.4	1.74	Agreed
	Religious education.							
9	differentiate disparate elements in Religious Education.	276	219	192	68	2.53	1.60	Agreed
10	judge the success of their own work and set targets for	388	309	118	41	2.85	1.67	Agreed
	improvement in Religious Education.							
11	involve themselves in self assessment	508	318	114	28	3.23	1.78	Agreed
12	help in their peer assessment in Religious Education.	165	196	198	58	1.92	1.36	Disagreed

Data source: Section B in the field data table was weighted to determine significance, level of significance 2.50. By the data analyzed in table 4, the correspondents rejected the idea that assessment help students to help their peer assessment in religious education. All other items consisting the cluster met the acceptance criteria mean of 2.50 and above on the four point rating scale.

Discussion

The survey shows that the Assessment for the improvement of students learning of Religious Education in the secondary school can be achieved by both teachers and students involved in proper and constant assessment of Religious Studies in the secondary schools. Respondents to research question one agreed that through assessment teachers make judgement about how the students are doing in religious education; provide the guideline on helping student to see what attitude that are needed for success in the subject. They also agreed that through assessment teachers provide guideline which helps students to improve in their knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject. Through assessment the teachers exert a positive force on curriculum of religious education. They use it as an effective basis for communication with parents and other partners. Through assessment teachers clearly reflect the achievement of student both in cognitive and affective domains and thus achieve proper certification of students. Assessment helps the teachers to check the achievement of stated objective and thus give students feedback which helps the students to identify the next step to take to improve their learning in the subject. These therefore fall in line with the postulates of Curriculum online (2000), all calling for effective employment of assessment to achieve the required goal in Religious Education teaching.

The survey also gives hint on how assessment helps in the learning of Religious Education. The respondents accepted that through assessment students identify relevant information to the questionnaire and assignment; recall relevant information in religious education and express it in a coherent form; and link different element of religious education curriculum in their studies. The respondent agreed also that assessment helps students to identify and label characteristic in familiar context in religious education; read and comprehend relevant materials, describe problems, propose solution and evaluate the solutions, and differentiate disparate elements in religious education. The respondents favoured also the facts that assessment helps students to judge the success of their own work and set target for improvement, and that it help them to achieve self assessment which lead them to improvement in the

Summary / Conclusion

Assessment has been a veritable tool in education process. By the evidence of this research, it is no more in doubt as to whether assessment can be used to improve the performance of students in religious education.

Teaching and learning without assessment is not useful for the educational progress of the students. When there is no assessment students cannot be promoted and certification becomes an illusion. The improvement and renovation of the religious education curriculum becomes hard is not impossible. Through assessment accurate and sound statements on students' proficiency is provided. These calls for the need to make assessment an on-going in the course of teaching and learning because so that effectiveness of the teaching strategy can be measured and thus provide a source of encouragement for students. Assessment should therefore be taken serious since through it emotional problems that retard the academic progress of the students are detected and corrected and also for the fact that serves as a basis for classification of students, for their promotion and measure of standards.

Recommendations

- 1 There should be constant assessment of the aims and learning outcomes of the students to identify essential learning.
- 2 A Religious Education programme continuum be created using essential learning in order to identify the development nature of Religious Education.
- 3 Religious Education curriculum should be often and often be reviewed in order to support assessment and evaluation of students achievement of the essential learning of the Religious Education program at all levels.
- 4 The Ministry of Education directives and protocols regarding assessment and evaluation of knowledge and understanding and skills should be followed in assessing and reporting Religious Education for secondary schools.

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