

Secondary School Teachers' Skills in a Significant Component of Classroom Assessment in North Central Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Globally, classroom teachers use assessment as a means of ascertaining knowledge gained by pupils following a teaching-learning process. In view of the importance of assessment, this paper sought to investigate the level of competencies and skills in classroom assessment among secondary school teachers in North Central Nigeria. The researcher evaluated the classroom assessment skills of teachers in North Central Nigeria, adopting a descriptive survey. From the population of 26,230 public senior school teachers in the region, 1440 made up the sample. They were selected from 60 secondary schools in North Central Nigeria using a multistage sampling technique. Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory (CALI) was the sole instrument used for data collection. While the research question was answered using mean, the research hypothesis was tested with a Four-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistic at a 0.05 alpha level of significance. The finding revealed that senior school teachers only managed to demonstrate moderate skill as they were at 'Below Expectation' in almost all the 'Standards'. Also, no significant differences were found among senior school teachers in their skills in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, and workshop training received, with the F-value of 0.219 and the p-value of 0.955. The paper concluded that the majority of senior school teachers in North Central Nigeria were at an average level in their classroom assessment skills. In view of that, it is recommended that the regulatory agencies for teacher training institutions should look into the contents of the minimum standard for courses related to classroom assessments by making their coverage wider enough to accommodate the rudiments of classroom assessments and their application to routine classroom situations.

Keywords: classroom assessment skills, senior school teachers, qualification, experience, workshop training

INTRODUCTION

A classroom teacher can determine how much knowledge pupils have acquired during a teaching-learning process by using assessment. It includes all procedures used to assess how well education has accomplished its aims and purposes (Akinyemi, 2017). The significance of classroom assessment can not be undermined as it is part of the teaching-learning process. The achievement of learning objectives is determined through assessment. Oyegoke (2017), for instance, conceived teaching and learning as two activities that are simultaneously taking place in a typical classroom setting. Learning is used to justify teaching. The only way to determine this is to assess. As a result, assessment is crucial to both teaching and learning and occupies a significant place in both students' and teachers' daily lives.

Iddo (2017) emphasized the importance of learning assessment as a crucial step in the teaching-learning process. Assessment of students' learning includes but is not limited to examination, testing, and marking (Tanner & Jones 2003). Since it goes much beyond simply comparing students' performance to standards, classroom assessment involves information sharing, communication, as well as teaching and learning. By implication, when establishing and using assessment methods that are best suitable for the goals the assessments serve, consideration for the curriculum and students should be made.

Additionally, assessment, its structure, and usage have a great influence on the culture, attitudes, and behavioural norms that form the learning process. To make sure that the environment in the classroom

promotes among the learners a desire for lifelong learning, self-esteem, and motivation, meticulous planning is necessary. Among the participants, classroom teachers are actively and consistently engaged in the evaluation of students' learning. They serve as the guidance by engaging, supervising, and directing students in various learning activities, even in a student-centered classroom where students take a much more active part by choosing which activities to do and when to complete them (Jabbarifar, 2009). Without the teacher in this capacity, pupils might not be properly led.

Based on the foregoing, it is essential to look at teachers' assessment abilities to uncover their comprehension of the numerous assessment components. This is because teachers in Nigerian schools frequently fail to provide their students with the necessary information and justification regarding classroom assessments, most notably tests. Maybe this explains why students often participate in a variety of activities to prevent what they perceive to be failure. Teachers need to have a sufficient understanding of the types of assessments that are frequently used in the classroom. Before the administration of any evaluation, they should let their students know. When testing students after a lesson, the teacher can provide them with rubrics on the subject being covered. According to Kagete (2013), there is justification for this because teachers and students need to comprehend the significance of evaluation for learning better. For students to compare their actual performance to the expected performance and take the necessary steps to narrow the gap between the two, it is necessary to educate them of the desired standard or objective (also known as the "criterion"). This would significantly alter how students view and behave during assessments in the classroom and deter cheating.

The improvement of students' learning is mostly dependent on teachers' assessment skills and knowledge. The Nigerian government acknowledges the crucial role that excellent teachers play in delivering high-quality instruction at all levels (FRN, 2013). The adage "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers" is one that most people would instantly concur with. The aforementioned assertion is not only now canonical, but it is also a reiteration of unquestionable truth that emphasizes the value of instructors and paves the way for the requirement of evaluating those teachers in all respects.

A study was carried out in Jamaica by Onyefulu (2018) to ascertain the classroom evaluation of primary (n=64) and secondary (n=93) school teachers. The findings showed that the teachers frequently employed portfolios, closed-book assessments, multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, short responses, and restricted essays. Similar findings were made by Suah and Ong (2012), who looked at the assessment habits of in-service Malaysian teachers (n=406) and discovered that they often employ conventional evaluation techniques. This was based on the techniques teachers employed to evaluate their students' learning. Despite the fact that secondary school teachers were also included in the study, it was different from the current study in that it was carried out in Nigeria.

Nenty, Adedoyin, Odili, and Major (2007) surveyed primary school teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices as a means of providing quality primary education in Botswana and Nigeria. This study focussed on examining teachers' perceptions of the six levels of Bloom's cognitive behaviour. Also, in a seemingly related study, Osmani (2021) employed a mixed-method design to look into the assessment methods of basic school teachers in the Sissala East Municipality of Ghana. The mean, standard deviations, t-test, and ANOVA were used to examine the quantitative data that was collected from 203 respondents. In the subsequent qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews with 12 individuals were conducted, and the results were then thematically interpreted. The results showed that traditional evaluation methods are used by teachers more often than alternative assessment tools.

In their study on the continuous assessment methods of secondary school teachers in Osun State, Faleye and Adefisoye (2016) discovered that teachers solely used cognitive development when assessing their students and ignored affective and psychomotor development. However, this goes against the assessment principle that says that to gather accurate data on a learner's overall performance, they need be exposed to a diversity of learning activities and evaluation instruments and methods.

From the above, it can be seen that there are substantial studies conducted on issues relating to classroom assessment both in Nigeria, Africa, and Asia, teachers' classroom assessment skills remain an area of importance in research, not only because classroom assessment is central to the teaching-learning process,

many of those studies were merely limited to the conduct of survey of classroom assessment practice. For instance, no study known to the researcher focused on evaluating the classroom assessment skills of the teachers. Therefore, this study is unique and relevant given the gaps in the previous studies.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives that guided this study were to:

1. determine the general level of senior school teachers' classroom assessment skills in North Central Nigeria.
2. determine the level of senior school teachers' skills in each of the components of classroom assessment in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in the study:

1. What is the level of teachers on each component of the classroom assessment skills in the North Central Zone of Nigeria?
2. Are there differences in senior school teachers' skills in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, and workshop training received in the North Central Zone of Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in senior school teachers' skills in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, and workshop training received in the North Central Zone of Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "assessment" is frequently used and has a number of diverse meanings, according to Bachman (2004). In fact, there doesn't appear to be agreement on what the term actually implies because it has been used so broadly and in so many various contexts in the fields of linguistic assessment and educational measurement. According to Brown (2004), assessment is any act of interpreting data regarding student performance that has been gathered using any of a wide range of methods or procedures. Assessment, according to Yetkin (2017), is the methodical collection of data about students' performance that enables teachers to keep track of their learning. According to Nguon (2013), assessment is the process of determining the level and kind of student performance or achievement, and consequently, by implication, a determination about the learning that has occurred. Furthermore, according to McMillian (2018), assessment involves the "collection, interpretation, and use of evidence of student learning to assist teacher decision making in a variety of ways. Accordingly, Osmani (2021) asserted that assessment is a crucial part of any educational process that is used to determine where students are now and what level they have reached, to provide feedback on their learning, to diagnose students' developmental needs, and to enable the planning of curricula, resources, and activities (Alderson, 2005).

In sum, any educational endeavour whose primary goal is to gather data for decisions about students' learning must prioritize assessment of students' learning. This corroborates Ghaicha's (2016) claim that the value of EA is found in its adjudicative and educational functions for both authorities and individuals. Authorities' perspectives on assessments are that they give those in charge of assessments enlightening information about three crucial tasks: choosing, monitoring, and holding accountable. For educational institutions, assessment results and other measurement data, including those from regular surveys, are useful tools. They contribute to decision-making about the operation of departments, programs, and curricula and offer potential actions to be

taken to improve all the pillars of an educational system by monitoring the performance of various assessment system components, commonly referred to as national assessments, and occasionally holding the people responsible for those components accountable. Additionally, it can be used for planning, budgeting, and rewards.

From the perspective of individuals, good assessments assist teachers in evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching, providing them with a framework to fine tune teaching methods (Zeliff, 2000). It also monitors student progress and achievement, determines the performance levels of individual students and teachers, and controls program evaluation and curriculum review in an effort to improve instruction and teacher effectiveness. Classroom assessments are not run in void. They are governed by the purposes, uses and functions to which they are put. The applications to which test-based information will be put have been claimed to be the most crucial factor in the development, adoption, or adaptation of educational tests.

Formative and summative assessments are the two fundamental types of assessment that have been identified in the literature. Unlike the latter, which takes place after the conclusion of the lesson, the former focuses on monitoring and improving students' learning and classroom activities (Amedahe & Asamoah-Gyimah, 2016; Nsikak-Abasi, & Akanaono, 2017; Nortvedt, & Buchholtz, 2018). 'Assessment for learning' is another name for it. It is diagnostic because it is used to track students' progress and spot their learning challenges so that, when necessary, remedial actions can be taken to improve students' learning (Ajogbeje, 2013; Amua-Sekyi, 2016). In the same spirit, a variety of classroom assessment techniques can be applied to learn more about students' academic progress. According to Thomas (2012), they can be divided into conventional and unconventional strategies. Exams, quizzes, textbook exercises, and tests are examples of traditional or teacher-centered techniques. Alternative approaches, in contrast, typically focus on the student and include activities like group projects, presentations, concept maps, journals, and portfolios (Thomas, 2012).

Berry (2008) also distinguished between traditional and alternative assessment approaches. Compared to alternate approaches like portfolios and observations, traditional methods like true-false and multiple-choice tests don't require as much time to administer and score. Alternative evaluations aim to encourage students' abilities to create and use a wide range of knowledge rather than only memorization of information and mastery of fundamental skills. Peer evaluation, observations, portfolios, interviews, projects, experiments, self-evaluation, and simulations are a few examples of alternate tools. Alternative assessments are divided into "product" and "performance" categories because, at any given time, the learning outcome to be assessed will either take the form of a product, like a research paper or a science report, or a performance, like an oral presentation or a demonstration of a laboratory procedure (Berry, 2008).

In conclusion, it is apparent that assessments, if better applied contribute to educational development as educational system would do to overall development. It is on that premise that Nigerian government through its National Policy on Education adopted the use of education as an instrument for the attainment of national development (FRN, 2014). In practice, there is lack of adequate provision for implementation of the classroom assessment in duo of the National Policy on Education and Secondary School Education Curriculum. Though, there is provision for evaluation guide with some evaluative questions which perhaps intend to assist in the attainment of the performance objectives. The two official educational documents have no direction as to what assessment methods and tools the classroom teachers can use.

METHODOLOGY

This research is quantitative. With a quantitative research design, the researcher would be able to work with quantifying and assessing factors, and get reliable findings (Apuke, 2017). The design, according to Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) permits researchers to answer research questions quantitatively. It equally enables testing of hypotheses. And by so doing, issues and phenomena are well understood. Furthermore, according to Xiong (2022), quantitative research is a field of study that collects numerical data and then analyzes it using mathematically based approaches with a concentration on statistics to explain phenomena.

In this paper, a descriptive survey approach was adopted by the researcher in his quest to evaluate the classroom assessment skills of teachers at senior schools in the North Central Nigeria. Surveys are a

comparatively traditional research methodology, claim Mathers, Fox, and Hunn (2009). They are essentially used for non-experimental descriptive approaches that seek to characterize and explain prevailing situations as they are. One of the arguments in favour of their use is the fact that survey designs often have both internal and external validity. This suggests that a survey using a random sampling method will produce a sample that is representative of the particular community being examined and will produce results that can be extended to the entire population. This supports the claim stated by Mathers, Fox, and Hunn (2009) that relatively small sample sizes can be utilized to provide results that can be extended to the entire population because surveys can employ a random sampling technique to pick participants.

Therefore, the population for the study comprised all teachers at senior schools in the North Central Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The zone comprises six states, which are: the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Kwara, Niger, Kogi Nassarawa, Benue, and Plateau states. The population was made up of 26,230 senior school teachers in North Central Nigeria (FME, 2020). The sample size for the study was made up of 1440 senior school teachers selected from 60 senior secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. These figures represented 5% of the total population (Adopted from The Research Advisors' Sample Size Table, 2006). A multistage sampling technique, a technique involving more than one sampling technique at different stages in selecting the required sample, was adopted in this study. The first stage involved the selection of three states out of the six states and FCT (comprising North-central) using a simple random sampling method (i.e., balloting), including the FCT that was on standby. Hence, the selected states were Kogi, Kwara, Niger, and the FCT. In the second stage, 15 schools were selected from the capital of each state, including the FCT, making a total of 60 schools. Lastly, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select 24 teachers, 12 males and 12 females from each school. Through this process, a total sample of 1440 senior school teachers participated in the study.

In addition, the adapted version of the Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory (CALI) was the sole instrument used for data collection in this study. The instrument was an adapted version of the Assessment Literacy Inventory (ALI) developed by Plake and Impara in the early 1990s to evaluate teachers' assessment literacy. CALI consists of 35 multiple-choice items. The inventory is therefore a standardized instrument that had been used by researchers and scholars of repute, and it has been administered over decades.

Lastly, frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze teachers' demographic data. The three-point rating scale was used for respondents' range scores (i.e., 'Below Expectation', 'At Expectation' and 'Above Expectation') as contained in the TIGER teacher evaluation model. The research question was answered using mean, while a Four-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistic was used to test research hypotheses at an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

RQ1: What are senior school teachers' skills in various components of classroom assessment in the North Central Nigeria?

In answering this question, mean scores for various components of CALI were used. The summary statistics of senior school teachers' skills are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means for Senior School Teachers by Component (Standard) on CALI in North Central Nigeria

Components of Classroom Assessment Skills (Standards)	Mean Score	Remark
1. Choosing Appropriate Assessment Methods	1.91	Low
2. Developing Appropriate Assessment Methods	2.17	Moderate
3. Administering, Scoring and Interpreting the Results of Assessments	1.86	Low

4. Using Assessment Results to Make Decisions	1.94	Low
5. Developing Valid Grading Procedures	1.92	Low
6. Communicating Assessment Results	1.77	Low
7. Recognizing Unethical or Illegal Practices	1.99	Low
Total	13.56	Moderate

As shown in Table 1, senior school teachers have only managed to demonstrate moderate skill as they were at 'Below Expectation' in almost all the 'Standards'. Though they had the highest mean score of 2.17 in Standard 2 – Developing Appropriate Assessment Methods, it is still at lowest continuum of 'At Expectation' (i.e., moderate) which is 2 – 3. All other mean scores would only be estimated to be 2. However, the overall mean scores which was 13.56 indicated that senior school teachers' skills in various components of classroom assessment were at expectation.

Hypothesis Testing

There is no significant difference in senior school teachers' skills in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, and workshop training received in the North Central Nigeria.

Table 2: 4-way Analysis of Variance showing the difference in senior school teachers' skill in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, and workshop training received in the North Central Nigeria

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	98.134 ^a	46	2.133	1.622	.006
Intercept	1014.257	1	1014.257	771.381	.000
Gender	1.408	1	1.408	1.071	.301
Qualification	8.709	3	2.903	2.208	.085
Experience	.383	2	.192	.146	.864
Workshop	1.949	1	1.949	1.483	.224
Gender * Qualification	7.635	3	2.545	1.936	.122
Gender * Experience	3.146	2	1.573	1.196	.303
Gender * Workshop	1.184	1	1.184	.900	.343
Qualification * Experience	4.913	6	.819	.623	.712
Qualification * Workshop	3.121	3	1.040	.791	.499
Experience * Workshop	2.401	2	1.200	.913	.402
Gender * Qualification * Experience	7.217	6	1.203	.915	.483

Gender * Qualification * Workshop	10.090	3	3.363	2.558	.054
Gender * Experience * Workshop	3.530	2	1.765	1.343	.262
Qualification * Experience * Workshop	6.147	6	1.024	.779	.586
Gender * Qualification * Experience * Workshop	1.437	5	.287	.219	.955
Error	1788.208	1360	1.315		
Total	6780.000	1407			
Corrected Total	1886.343	1406			
a. R Squared = .052 (Adjusted R Squared = .020)					

Table 2 revealed whether a statistical difference exists in senior school teachers' skills in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, and workshop training received in North Central Nigeria. Based on gender, the p -value of 0.301 obtained is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, and thus, no significant difference occurred in senior school teachers' skills in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on gender ($F_{(1)} = 1.071$; $p > 0.05$). Secondly, based on educational qualification, the p -value of 0.085 obtained is greater than the 0.05 alpha level. Hence, there was no significant difference in senior school teachers' skills in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on educational qualifications ($F_{(3)} = 2.208$; $p > 0.05$). Thirdly, based on teaching experience, the p -value of 0.864 obtained is greater than the 0.05 alpha level. Also, there was no significant difference in senior school teachers' skills in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on teaching experience ($F_{(2)} = 0.146$; $p > 0.05$). Lastly, based on the workshop training received, the p -value of 0.224 obtained is greater than 0.05 at the alpha level. Hence, there was no significant difference in the skills of senior school teachers in administering, scoring, and interpreting assessment results based on the workshop training received ($F_{(1)} = 1.483$; $p > 0.05$).

Therefore, the F -value of 0.219 with the p -value of 0.955 was obtained when computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p -value of 0.995 is greater than 0.05 alpha level, hypothesis three was not rejected and thus, there was no statistically significant difference in senior school teachers' skill in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of assessments based on gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, and workshop training received in North Central Nigeria.

On the teachers' skills in various components of classroom assessment, the results revealed that the participants were just at the expectation (moderate) level, though slightly above the below-expectation (low) level, because they had mean scores that were below 2 in six components. This is at variance with the findings of Perry (2013) that principals and teachers had mean scores above 3 in some of the components of classroom assessment. Also at variance are the findings of Naim, et al. (2016) that reported a high level of competency in classroom assessment for teachers. Such lower mean scores observed in the present study may not come as a surprise to the researcher. This is because, during data collection, some of the respondents confessed they were only familiar with continuous assessment.

Also, the findings have indicated that gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, and workshop training received do not influence senior school teachers' skills in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of the assessment. The findings align with those of Chalachew and Terefe (2020), who reported no statistically significant gender difference in analyzing test results and test revisions among teachers. Similarly, senior school teachers do not differ in their skills in using assessment results to make decisions based on gender, educational qualification, teaching experience, and workshop training received.

CONCLUSION

This paper evaluated the classroom assessment skills of senior school teachers in the North Central Nigeria. CALI was the sole instrument used for data collection. From the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that the majority of senior school teachers in North Central Nigeria were at an average level (based on TIGER scale) in their classroom assessment skills. This is somewhat below the global average level, at least fifty percent. Also, if gender and qualification do not significantly influence the teachers' skills in classroom assessment, it would be the least expected for their experience and training. This may suggest perhaps that this aspect of the teacher training programme is not adequate, hence, it calls for urgent attention. In view of that, it is recommended that the regulatory agencies for teacher training institutions should look into the contents of the minimum standard for courses related to classroom assessments by making its coverage wider enough to accommodate the rudiments of classroom assessments and their application to routine classroom situations. However, in the interim, workshop training programmes on classroom assessments should be organised for the in-service teachers as an immediate remedy.

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