

# TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT LITERACY AS CORRELATES OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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## Abstract

*Assessment is an important aspect of the teaching-learning process. The amount of information learned by a student in a particular field cannot be determined without an appropriate assessment. This study examined teachers' assessment literacy as a determinant of assessment practices in Akwa Ibom State. The study was guided by two hypotheses. The correlational design was adopted. The population comprised 2885 secondary school teachers in Uyo Federal Constituency of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A sample of 288 of the population was selected using simple random sampling technique. Two instruments, Teacher Assessment Literacy Test (TALT) and Assessment Practice Questionnaire (APQ) developed by the researcher, were used in collecting data for the study. The instruments were validated by three experts, two in educational evaluation and one in guidance and counselling, all from the Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling, University of Uyo. Cronbach Alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the instruments. Reliability coefficient of 0.81 and .79 were obtained for the TALT and APQ respectively. Data obtained were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. Findings of the study revealed among others that teachers' assessment literacy significantly relates with assessment practices. It was recommended that teachers should undergo professional development in assessment so as to become assessment literate for effective assessment practices in schools.*

**Keywords:** Assessment literacy, Assessment for learning, Assessment of learning.

## Introduction

Teachers are the executors of the national education curriculum. Their major responsibilities include helping students to inculcate positive values and attitudes, guiding students towards the discovery of new knowledge for themselves, exposing students to useful skills, counselling them on personal and societal issues. The greatest responsibility of the teacher is that of molding and equipping students to fit into their ever-changing social and political environments, equip them with the needed attitudes and values to cope with challenges and become functional contributors to the economic

development of their society. The extent of teacher's successes in inculcating knowledge into learners is always considered through assessment practices.

Learners are always presented with large amounts of information during teaching. The teachers might feel satisfied that they have covered the specified curriculum for the subject, but the amount of information gained by the learners can only be obtained through the right assessment process. The different methods and tools used by educators to measure, evaluate and document the skill acquisition, learning progress, or educational needs of learners is referred to as assessment (The Glossary of Educational Reform, 2015).

According to Thomas, Allman and Beechin Ryan (2018), assessment can:

- i. Provide insight on how teachers can improve their teaching skills,
- ii. make it possible for teachers to monitor and improve students' learning,
- iii. help teachers with information in selecting appropriate teaching methods for each group of learners,
- iv. provide information which learners may use to improve their understanding of concepts taught by teachers,
- v. help students to see assessment as part of the process of learning,
- vi. assist learners to determine how they can acquire skills and knowledge,
- vii. help students to make preparation for external examinations, mostly when the format of classroom assessment is similar to that of the external examination.

Effective implementation of assessment leads to improvement in students' learning (Campbell & Collins 2007). However, some teachers think that regular assessment and testing are not necessary in classroom practice, thus, they may feel reluctant to undertake activities related to assessment on a regular basis. The reason for improper practice of assessment could be that most of such teachers are deficient in assessment literacy.

The ability of the teachers to develop and use high quality instruments for assessment is termed assessment literacy (Popham, 2004; Stiggins, 2004). Being able to connect learners' assessment to the learning and teaching process is an essential part of assessment literacy. Teachers can make this connection by linking test items with the objectives of instruction, and use the outcome of the test to give feedback to the students on their performance. Teachers who are assessment literate are able to interpret data from test and use it to make useful adjustments to teaching.

According to Umer, Zakaria and Alshara (2018), assessment literacy is not a straightforward concept. It has different parts including teacher's knowledge of assessment principles and skills, ability to score and interpret assessment results, ability to use results from assessment to make decisions in teaching, development of materials for learning, reporting appropriate assessment results to concerned stakeholders and

recognizing unethical practices in assessment. If any of these aspects of assessment adhered to, it can negatively affect the whole process of teaching and learning. For instance, evidence shows that teachers' poor choice of assessment tasks and process has a strong negative effect on the outcome of students' learning (Galluzzo, 2005; Umer, 2015). Results from empirical studies shows that the design of assessment influences the learners' ability to learn. Assessments that are in agreement with learning outcomes usually lead to high-order learning—analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Manjarrés, 2005; Muñoz & Álvarez, 2010).

This study adopted Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory that emphasises the interaction that takes place between the learner and a more knowledgeable person who can be a parent or teacher. Assessment emphasizes the quality of students' participation. Implicit in this view is that the student is not just an object of assessment, but an active participant in different aspects of assessment, such as discussing the aims and criteria and assessing their own work and that of others. This theory is quite relevant to this study. As indicated in the theory, without a good knowledge of assessment practice, teachers will not be able to conduct assessment effectively.

Larson (2008) conducted a study on the influence of teachers' competence on assessment and students' performance in English Language in secondary schools in Lagos State and found that teachers' knowledge of content, assessment, and general pedagogical knowledge significantly related to students' academic performance in English Language. The reviewed literature on teachers' competence of assessment and students' performance in English Language showed a significant relationship. Also, Abike (2009) carried out a study on school variables and students' academic achievement in English Language in senior secondary schools in Ibadan and reported that teachers' behaviour, teachers' commitment and knowledge of instrument development significantly influenced students' academic performance in English Language.

Majority of the studies on assessment literacy are about its effects on students' learning; none examines whether assessment literacy is what determines teachers' practice of assessment. Without such information, it would be difficult to identify areas in which the needed help could be rendered to teachers to improve their practice of assessment. This study on teachers' assessment literacy and determinants of assessment practice was conducted to contribute towards identifying the correlates of assessment practice among teachers.

Today in Akwa Ibom State, it is not uncommon to see many teachers conducting class assessment once in a term and using such tests to give a general rating of the students' performance in the term. Such assessments cover all the topics taught for the term. As if that could be managed, many teachers have completely neglected assessment of their students in the affective domain and leave the section in students assessment report blank.

The main purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between teachers' assessment literacy and teachers' assessment practices in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The study seeks to determine the relationship between teachers':

1. knowledge of assessment principles and teachers' practice of assessment.
2. assessment instrument development skills and teachers' practice of assessment.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses will be tested in this study:

1. Teachers' knowledge of assessment principles does not significantly relate with teachers' practice of assessment significantly in Uyo Federal Constituency.
2. Teachers' assessment instrument development skill does not significantly relate with teachers' practice of assessment significantly in Uyo Federal Constituency.

### **Methods**

This study was conducted in Uyo Federal Constituency of Akwa Ibom State. Uyo Federal Constituency is made up of four local government areas, namely; Uyo, Ibesikpo Asutan, Uruan and Nsit Atai. A correlational survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was made up of the 2,885 secondary school teachers in Uyo Federal Constituency. The sampling was done at multi-stages using proportionate sampling techniques to select 288 teachers as sample from eight from the public secondary schools. The sample represented 10 percent of the entire population. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study: Teachers' Assessment Literacy Test (TALT) and Teachers Assessment Practice Questionnaire (APQ). The TALT contained 10 items on teachers' assessment literacy. The items had four options with one correct option and three distracters. The APQ contained 20 items on teachers' assessment practices. The instruments were validated by three lecturers, two from educational evaluation and one in guidance and counseling from the Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling, University of Uyo. Their suggestions and corrections were effected on the final copy of the instrument before it was used for data collection.

The instruments were trial-tested on a sample of 20 teachers in one of the secondary schools in Uyo Federal Constituency that was not part of the sampled schools to determine its reliability. Internal consistency reliability was calculated for the APQ instruments using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded coefficients of 0.81, while split-half method was used to determine the reliability of the TALT, which yielded a coefficient of .78. The instruments were administered by the researcher to the selected teachers in the secondary schools in Uyo Federal Constituency. In each of the schools, the researcher

presented a letter of introduction from the Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling, University of Uyo, Uyo to seek permission to conduct the study. After obtaining permission, the researcher administered the instrument to the teachers and waited for them to complete and retrieved it from them. This ensured 100% retrieval of the instruments. The data obtained were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics. A significance level of .05 was used to test all the hypotheses. The interpretation of the hypotheses was based on the p-value. Where the p-value is less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected or otherwise retained.

## Results

**Hypothesis 1:** Teachers' knowledge of assessment principles does not relate to teachers' practice of assessment significantly in Uyo Federal Constituency.

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Teacher's Knowledge of Assessment Principles and Teacher's Practice of Assessment**

		Teachers' Knowledge of Assessment Principles	Teachers' Practice of Assessment
Teachers' Knowledge of Assessment Principles	Pearson Correlation	1	.670 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	288	288
Teachers' Practice of Assessment	Pearson Correlation	.670 **	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	288	288

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result in Table 1 indicated that the calculated correlation coefficient of .670 is significant since the p-value of .000 is less than .05 levels of significance at 286 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that teachers' knowledge of assessment principles does not relate with teachers' practice of assessment significantly in Uyo Federal Constituency is rejected. Teachers' knowledge of assessment principles relates significantly with teachers' practice of assessment in Uyo Federal Constituency.

## Hypothesis 2

Teachers' assessment instrument development skill does not significantly relate with teacher's practice of assessment significantly in Uyo Federal Constituency.

**Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Teacher's Assessment Instrument Development Skills and Teacher's Practice of Assessment**

		Teachers' Assessment Instrument Development Skills	Teachers' Practice of Assessment
Teachers' Assessment Instrument Development Skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.793**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	288	288
Teachers' Practice of Assessment	Pearson Correlation	.793**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	288	288

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result in Table 2 indicates that the calculated r-value of .793 is significant since the  $p = .000$  is less than .05 levels of significance at 286 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that teacher's assessment instrument development skill does not significantly relate with teachers' practice of assessment significantly in Uyo Federal Constituency is rejected. Teachers' assessment instrument development skill has a significant relationship with teachers' practice of assessment in Uyo Federal Constituency.

### Discussion of Findings

The main purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between teachers' assessment literacy and teachers' assessment practices in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The study was to determine the relationship between teachers' knowledge of assessment principles and teachers' practice of assessment and the relationship between teachers' assessment instrument development skills and teachers' practice of assessment.

The finding on null hypothesis one indicated that teacher's knowledge of assessment principles significantly relates to their assessment practices in Uyo Federal Constituency of Akwa Ibom State. The reason for the result could be that teachers who have good knowledge of assessment principles find it easy to practice assessment of students in schools. The assessment might cover the psychomotor, affective and the cognitive domains. Such teachers might always be excited to make use of such knowledge in conducting assessment using various techniques. The reason for the result could also be an indication that teachers with a poor knowledge of assessment principles might find it difficult to practice assessment in secondary schools. The finding of this study is similar to that of Umer, Zakaria and Alshara (2018) who found incongruity between teachers' assessment tasks and course learning outcomes. The reason for this finding could have been due to teachers' low knowledge of assessment principles.

The finding of null hypothesis 2 indicated that teacher's assessment instrument development skill significantly relates to teachers' assessment practice in Uyo Federal Constituency of Akwa Ibom State. The reason for the finding could be that teachers with good knowledge of developing assessment instrument might have considered assessment an interesting aspect of the teaching and learning process since they have the ability to develop the needed assessment instrument. On the other hand, teachers who find it difficult to develop various assessment instrument might consider assessment as a burden that should be carried out once in an academic session. The finding of this study is similar to that of Umer, Zakaria and Alshara (2018) who found out that teachers with low knowledge of instrument development developed instruments to measure only memorization, neglecting other important aspects such as application evaluation and synthesis. Such deficiency can discourage teachers from practicing assessment in their various subjects.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that teachers' assessment literacy significantly relates with teacher's practice of assessment among secondary school teachers in Uyo Federal Constituency. It was also concluded that a good knowledge of assessment principles is needed for teachers' practice of assessment.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Emphasis needs to be laid on the principles of assessment during teacher training. Such emphasis would help teachers to understand the importance of assessment in order to practice it properly.
2. Teachers should be given regular training on the development of assessment instruments to keep them up to date with the development of various instruments.

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