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Formative Assessment Practices of Junior Secondary School Teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Effective formative assessment is essential for monitoring learning progress, improving instructional decisions, and providing students with timely feedback; however, evidence regarding teachers' implementation of formative assessment in junior secondary schools remains limited in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria. This study examines how junior secondary school teachers plan formative assessments, implement assessment methods and procedures, and provide feedback on students' performance. A descriptive survey design was employed, with a population of 1,567 junior secondary school teachers and a sample of 157 respondents selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using the researchers-developed Junior Secondary School Teachers' Formative Assessment Practices Questionnaire, which demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$) and used a five-point response scale ranging from always to never. Descriptive statistics comprising means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions. The findings indicate that teachers plan formative assessments by aligning assessment tasks with learning outcomes and taught content and by considering the six cognitive levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Teachers commonly administer written classroom assessments, design tasks that enable high levels

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of student achievement, and provide whole-class face-to-face feedback, immediate feedback during task completion, and written comments on assessed work. Nevertheless, teachers rarely sample assessment tasks across all curriculum themes, involve students in group projects, or provide feedback after every formative assessment. The study concludes that although teachers demonstrate several appropriate formative assessment practices, important gaps remain in curriculum coverage, collaborative assessment, and feedback consistency. These findings provide empirical guidance for improving classroom assessment practices and support the recommendation that the Borno State Ministry of Education provide further training and assessment-related professional development for junior secondary school teachers.

Keywords: Assessment Practices; Formative Assessment; Junior Secondary Schools; Student Feedback; Teacher Professional Development

INTRODUCTION

Educational assessment is the systematic process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences (Zhou, 2023). In educational systems worldwide, assessment of learning are a classic way of measuring students' progress and are integral to accountability of schools and the educational system. Assessment is inseparably linked with teaching and learning. The contribution of assessment to an educational system is so significant that it forms the basis for almost all fundamental decision making. Throughout an educational system, decisions have to be made about students, curricula and programmes and educational policies.

Formative assessment is an instructional strategy that enhances teacher involvement in evaluating student progress and broadens the assessment process. This approach facilitates ongoing feedback and fosters student engagement and motivation (Mitchell, 2023). In Nigeria, adopting formative assessment aligns with global trends in education, aiming to improve the quality and relevance of assessment practices. Despite its potential, the successful implementation of formative assessment requires teachers to understand its principles, processes, and procedures (Uvie, 2021). Teachers must be skilled in designing and administering effective assessments, analyzing results, and utilizing feedback to enhance student learning

Assessment is an integral part of instruction as it determines whether or not the goals of education are being met. Considering the content of curriculum in designing any assessment is vital as it helps in identifying and meeting the educational goal (Chappius & Stiggius, 2002). Assessment influences decisions about grades, placement, advancement, instructional needs and curriculum. Well planned and designed assessment methods provide teachers with valuable feedbacks about students learning, what students learned, how well they learned it and where they struggled. Assessment makes students more active and responsible for their education, it serves to improve their learning. Assessments support deep learning, develop critical thinking and promote students' interaction and continuity of the learning experiences (Kosan, 2021.

While formative assessments play a central role in the evaluation of student learning, they provide relevant measures of many important learning outcomes and indirect evidence concerning others. They make expected learning outcomes explicit to students and show what types of performance are valued. The validity of the information they provide, however, depends on the care that goes into the planning and preparation of the assessments (Miller, Linn & Gronlund, 2009).

The vast array of formative assessment procedures used in the school can be classified and described in many different ways. Formative assessment procedures are frequently selected on the basis of their objectivity, accuracy or convenience. Thus, formative assessment procedures can contribute to improvements in the teaching-learning process itself and contribute directly to improved student teaching as well as inform planning and decision making (Miller et.al. 2009).

One of the fundamental principles of formative assessment is that students at any level need feedback. Students should know how close they are to their school learning outcomes or goals as a result of their educational activities. Formative assessment should include the provision of feedback. For formative assessments to contribute to students' learning they must receive high-quality feedback on their efforts (Tontus, 2020).

Feedback from carefully developed formative assessment can be utilized to improve instruction, such information can aid in judging: the appropriateness and attainability of the instructional goals, the usefulness of the instructional materials and the effectiveness of the instructional methods. Furthermore, literature confirms that formative assessment results inform teachers on whether students have understood the learning

material or not and enables teachers to have a clear guideline on how they should plan for their next lessons (Mainde, Mtonga, Magasu & Mpolomoka, 2023).

An effective formative assessment begins with an assessment plan that specifically describes the instructional objectives and content to be measured and the relative emphasis to be given to each intended learning outcomes. Mahendra, Dewi and Wahyuni (2021) determined formative assessment planning during online learning in Indonesia. The findings showed that all teachers successfully integrated formative assessment planning into their lesson plan. There were formative techniques that appeared in the lesson plan, such as questioning technique, formative task, daily test, online discussion, and self-assessment.

Babatimehinet et. al. (2025) determined teachers' knowledge of key issues such as classroom assessment, teaching process and assessment procedure in school-based assessment among secondary school teachers in Ondo state, Nigeria. The result indicated highest mean score in the classroom assessment (M = 7.81, SD = 0.941), indicating relatively better implementation in this area. Teaching processes had a lower mean score (M = 5.70, SD = 1.774), while assessment procedures recorded the lowest mean score (M = 4.20, SD = 1.612), reflecting weaker implementation.

Sheikh and Manap, (2024) conducted a study on classroom assessment practices in secondary school education in Kuala Selangor, Malaysia. The findings revealed that teachers mostly use teacher-centered strategies while other teachers use the methods of the project, try to succeed, peer, practical, group, collaborative, class and individual. Additionally, most teachers use quiz techniques, question-answers, training, open-ended questions and closed questions. The result further revealed some teachers use the reward trend and fostering a sense of responsibility among students.

Vlachou, (2018) investigated classroom assessment practices in middle school science lessons among Greek science teachers. The findings of this study revealed that participants focused more on the summative uses of assessment, without effectively using the assessment evidence to complete the learning loop and thus meet the formative assessment requirements. Teachers appeared to use some formative assessment principles which are valuable in promoting student learning, but their approaches were more teacher-directed while students appeared not to have any role in the assessment process.

Ezeugo (2019) determined test feedback strategies adopted by primary school teachers in Anambra State, Nigeria. Findings of the study revealed that teachers majorly

gave feedback in writing or print form which included handwritten comments on students' assessed work, written numeric scores, grades, averages or positions, etc. they also gave face-to-face feedbacks to whole classes, individual students and small groups of students.

Gan, An and Liu (2021) studied 308 university students' perceived teacher feedback practices and their feedback experiences in an English Studies course in two Universities in China. Results of the study revealed teacher facilitative feedback was found to be most frequently used in both the two universities, suggesting that teachers involved in the Integrated English course were highly inclined to provide scaffoldings to facilitate students solving problems or performing tasks independently in the daily classroom. The dominance of facilitative feedback practices in this English Studies course, the study concluded could be related to the recent adoption of tasked-based language teaching initiated in the China's reform of the tertiary English Studies curriculum in line with a constructivist perspective of learning as opposed to traditional grammar-translation approach.

Statement of the Problem

The reintroduction of the UBE programme and the expansion of its scope from six to nine-year basic education in Nigeria brought a new dimension to continuous assessment in the form of formative assessment at the primary and junior secondary school levels in Nigeria. School based assessment is expected to be a formative tool to ensure that valid and reliable certification examination results are obtained. In Nigeria, adopting formative assessment aligns with global trends in education, aiming to improve the quality and relevance of assessment practices. Despite its potential, the successful implementation of formative assessment requires teachers to understand its principles, processes, and procedures. Teachers must be skilled in designing and administering effective assessments, analyzing results and utilizing feedback to enhance student learning. However, studies have shown that inadequate teacher preparation and limited knowledge of assessment practices are significant barriers to effective formative assessment implementation in many developing countries, including Nigeria. The general absence of some of these features as reported by research studies informed the researchers to conduct the study on formative assessment practices of junior secondary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno state, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. determine how junior secondary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis plan assessments;
2. find out the methods and procedures followed by junior secondary school teachers of Maiduguri Metropolis to conduct assessments; and
3. assess how junior secondary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis give assessment feedbacks to students on their performance; and

Research Questions

The following questions were formulated to facilitate the attainment of the study's objectives.

1. How do junior secondary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis plan formative assessments?
2. What are the methods and procedures followed by junior secondary teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis to formative assessments?
3. How do junior secondary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis give formative assessment feedbacks to students on their performance?

METHODOLOGY

The design used was the descriptive research design. This was based on the claim of Cohen and Manion (2007) that the descriptive research design has the potential to generate useful and analysable data that represent a wider target population, generate numerical data for ease of comparison and provide descriptive, inferential and explanatory information. This design was used to obtain information concerning teachers' formative assessment practices and to describe what exists with respect to variables or conditions in this situation. The researchers adopted the descriptive research design because it had the advantage of producing a good amount of responses.

The population for the study was one thousand, five hundred and sixty seven (1,567) junior secondary school teachers within Maiduguri metropolis. A sample of one hundred and fifty seven (157) respondents were sampled through simple random sampling technique which constitutes 10% of the population. This was in line with Cohen and Manion (2007) who recommended that when dealing with large population in a survey research, sample size of 10% to 30% of the population is considered adequate.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire tagged **"**Junior Secondary School Teachers' Formative Assessment Practices Questionnaire" (JSSTFAPQ)" The structured questionnaire was developed by the researchers. The questionnaire had a Cronbach alpha reliability index of 0.78 and consisted of twenty eight (22) items. The items on the questionnaire were responded on a 5 point scale ranging from always to never. The researchers administered the questionnaire to the respondents at the schools and were retrieved the same day.

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer all the research questions. Descriptive statistics were used because the statements on the questionnaire described formative assessment practices of junior secondary school teachers. Values assigned to the responses were as follows: always - 5 points, often - 4 points, sometimes -3 points, rarely -2 points and never - 1 point. Since the five point rating scale was used for the responses, the criterion mean/decision rule was based on mean 3.00. The criterion mean was established by summing the scores on the five point scale and dividing it by the number of the cases. The analyses were presented on the basis of the research questions.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: How do junior secondary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis plan formative assessments?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of How Junior Secondary School Teachers Plan Formative Assessments

S/No. Item Statement	N	Mean	SD
1. Ensure that formative assessment tasks align to learning outcomes	157	3.50	1.02
2. Consider learners identified needs in planning formative assessment tasks	157	3.60	1.18
3. Consider the six levels of cognitive outcomes (Bloom's Taxonomy) while developing learning outcomes	157	3.70	1.27
4. Align formative assessment tasks with what has been taught	157	4.35	0.91
5. Design formative assessments that engage students in the process of learning rather than simply producing a final product	157	3.65	1.20
6. Ensure that formative assessment items are valid and reliable before implementing	157	3.55	0.65
7. Sample formative assessment items from all themes in the junior secondary school curriculum	157	2.85	1.06

The results of data analysis on how teachers plan formative assessment in Table I reveals higher mean scores than the criterion measure of 3.00 in all the items except item 7 which is below the bench mark (M=2.85, SD=1.01) indicating that most teachers do not sample formative assessment items from all the themes in the content of the curriculum.

Research Question 2: What are the methods and procedures followed by junior secondary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis in conducting formative assessments?

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Methods and Procedures Junior Secondary School Teachers Conduct Formative Assessment

S/No. Item Statement	N	Mean	SD
8. Allow students to reveal their errors, then make corrections using formative assessment rubrics	157	4.10	0.83
9.Encourage self-assessments among students to encourage critical thinking	157	4.05	1.07
10. Encourage peer assessments among students to for internalization of formative assessment criteria	157	3.65	1.06
11. Conduct written formative assessments in the Class	157	4.01	0.85
12. Engage students in group projects	157	2.65	1.15
13. Provide a rubric with straightforward evaluation criteria	157	2.85	1.15
14. Provide formative assessment tasks that allow Students to achieve at a high level	157	4.00	1.18
15. Conduct formative assessments after treating each unit/topic	157	3.40	1.32

The results of data analysis on methods and procedures teachers conduct formative assessments

in Table 2 indicates that the mean scores are higher than the criterion mean of 3.0. This shows that the required methods and procedures are followed by junior secondary school teachers in conducting formative assessments in schools, except item 12 which is below the mean bench mark (M=2.65, SD= 1.15) indicating teachers do not engage students in group projects.

Research Question 3: How do junior secondary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis give formative assessment feedbacks to students?

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of How Junior Secondary School Teachers Give Formative Assessment Feedbacks to Students

S/No.	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD
16.	Provide face-to-face formative assessment feedbacks to whole class	157	3.15	1.01
17.	Provide sufficient and detailed feedback using feedback and self-assessment sheets	157	3.75	0.99
18.	Provide facilitative feedback to individual students	157	3.15	1.01
19.	Give feedback from formative assessment tasks to students promptly	157	4.10	0.89
20.	Give on-the-moment feedback (feedback as students are still engaged in the task)	157	3.5	0.97
21.	Give feedback in written or print form which included comments on students' formative assessment	157	4.15	0.96
22.	Provide feedback to learners after Each formative assessment task is completed	157	2.20	0.51

The results of data analysis on how junior secondary school teachers give assessment feedbacks to students in Table 3 reveals higher mean scores than the criterion measure of 3.0 in all the items except item 22 which is below the bench mark (M=2.20, SD=0.51) indicating that most teachers do not provide feedback to learners after each formative assessment task is completed.

DISCUSSION

The result of data analysis on research question one which determined how teachers plan formative assessment reveled that teachers plan formative assessment by ensuring that assessment tasks align to learning outcomes**,** consider learners identified needs in planning assessment tasks, consider the six levels of cognitive outcomes in the Bloom's Taxonomy, align classroom assessment tasks with what has been taught and ensure that assessment items are valid and reliable before implementing formative assessments. These findings by and large are consistent with the position of many educational measurement experts such as Miller, Linn and Gronlund (2009) who asserted that an effective formative assessment begins with a plan that specifically describes the instructional objectives and content to be measured and the relative emphasis to be given

to each intended learning outcomes. This is followed by the selection of the most appropriate item formats and the preparation of items and tasks that are relevant to the learning outcomes. The result on teachers not sampling formative assessment items from all themes in the junior secondary school curriculum, in the view of the researchers could be attributed to the voluminous nature of the junior secondary school curriculum which makes it impossible to sample assessment from all themes.

The findings of research question two which determined methods and procedures of conducting formative assessment by teachers revealed that teachers encourage self and peer assessments among students, conduct written formative assessments in the class and provide formative assessment tasks that allow students to achieve at a high level. These are in line with the findings of Sheikh and Manap (2024) who found that teachers in Kuala Selangor, Malaysia use teacher-centered strategies while other teachers use the methods of try to succeed, peer, practical, group, collaborative, class and individual methods of assessment. Furthermore the study also found that teachers do not provide rubric with straight forward-evaluation criteria and do not engage students in group projects. This finding is similar to that of Vlachou, (2018) who found that Greek science teachers use formative assessment principles which are valuable in promoting student learning, but their approaches were more teacher-directed while students appeared not to have any role in the assessment process.

Regarding research question three which determined how junior secondary school teachers give formative assessment feedback to students on their performance indicated that teachers provide face-to-face formative assessment feedbacks to whole class, facilitative feedback to individual students from formative assessment tasks promptly, on-the-moment formative assessment feedback as students are still engaged in the tasks as well as feedback in written or print form which included comments on students' assessed work. These findings are in agreement with that of Ezeugo (2019) who found primary school teachers in Anambra State, Nigeria majorly gave feedback in written or print form which included handwritten comments on students' assessed work, written numeric scores, grades, averages or positions, etc. they also gave face-to-face feedbacks to whole classes, individual students and small groups of students. However, the result also revealed that most teachers do not provide formative assessment feedback to learners after each assessment task is completed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of study it is concluded that junior secondary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolis engage in a wide range of desirable formative assessment practices ranging from considering the content of the curriculum while planning formative assessments, considering the Bloom's categories of cognitive learning outcomes and selecting appropriate item formats while planning formative assessments. It is also concluded that required methods and procedures are followed by junior secondary school teachers in conducting assessments in schools and giving timely feedback to students on their performance However, most of the teachers do not assess students from all the content of the curriculum and do not engage students in group projects.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward based on the findings of the study:

Borno state Ministry of Education should ensure that teachers in junior secondary schools go for further training and take more courses in formative assessment to improve their skills and in content sampling. The ministry should also through the State Universal Basic Education Board ensure that junior secondary school teachers use desirable classroom assessment practices especially in the area of engaging students in group projects.

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