ASSESSMENT PRACTICES, SKILLS AND BELIEFS ABOUT ASSESSMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

(A CASE STUDY OF IJEBU ODE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE)

BY

SAKA OLUWAGBEMISOLA VICTORIA
MATRIC NUMBER: 17032204007
COMBINATION: ECO/MAT

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL EDUCATION, TAI SOLARIN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION OMU-IJEBU, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF NIGERIA CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION (NCE)

APRIL, 2021

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this project was carried out by **Saka Oluwagbemisola V.** with matriculation number **17032204007** in the Department of ECO/MAT, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Tai Solarin College of Education Omu-Ijebu.

_____ _____

Mr Kareem A.O **Date**
Supervisor

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the Almighty God, not only for his ever biding faithfulness, but also for giving me the strength to arrive at this point in my educational pursuit. Also, I dedicated this research to Mr and Mrs Saka.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the most high God, maker of Heaven and Earth, the Alpha and Omega, Ancient of Days, I am that I am, Rose of Sharon, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Lion of Judah, the Really of the Valley, my Maker and My creator for the inspiration and insight bestowed upon me to put this project together and for His provision, protection and unlimited blessing over me throughout my years in Tai Solarin College of Education.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my supportive, understanding and knowledgeable supervisor Mr Kareem, A.O for his dedicated effort toward the successful of this project I pray that God will bless you than your expectation Ma.

I sincerely appreciate the drivers that drives me to this world i.e. my parents Mr. & Mrs. Saka for their full support, finances, prayer and their encouragement given to me even when it seems tough and rough you are always there for me. May God reward all your good deeds and you shall eat the fruit of your labour.

Finally, I want to appreciate those that I couldn't mention but has contributed positively in one way or the other to this success of my programme. God bless and reward you all.

ABSTRACT

This research work examines the assessment practices, skills and beliefs about assessment of primary school teachers. The population for the study comprised of male and female teachers in Ijebu Ode Local Government, Ogun State. Out of the total number of respondents, two hundred respondents were randomly selected. Researcher designed questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents. The findings of the study reveals that indicate a contradiction between what they say they do and what they believe, suggesting that teachers need opportunities for reflection, self assessment and more guidance on formative assessment practices.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Assessment of pupilsis very critical because effective teaching decisions are based on the ability of teachers to understand their pupilsand to match actions with accurate assessments (McMillan, 2008). However, past research has shown that there are many problems associated with teachers' classroom assessment practices. These include teachers' lack of an adequate knowledge base regarding the basic testing and measurement concepts (Daniel & King, 1998; Schafer &Lissirz, 1987; Stiggins, 2005), limited teacher training in assessment (Stiggings, &Bridgeford, 1985) and failure of teachers to employ and adhere to measurement guidelines they learned in measurement courses (Campbell & Evans, 2000).

Teachers adopt different classroom assessment practices to evaluate students' learning outcomes, and they spend much of their classroom time engaged in student assessment related activities. Teachers control classroom assessment environments by choosing how they assess their students, the frequency of these assessments, and how they give pupilsfeedback. All these are a clear indication that classroom assessments play an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Just like teachers everywhere, Nigeria school teachers are the key drivers of the education process. Their instructional and classroom assessment practices are a means by which the education system is enhanced and defined (Nenty, Adedoyin, Odili, & Major, 2007). For this reason, it is

imperative to understand the ways in which teachers feel about assessment practices, their perceptions regarding assessment training and their experiences as they attempt to use various assessment methods to evaluate students' learning outcomes. It is also important to understand their thought processes as they develop and use assessment methods, grade students' work and interpret assessment results. Teachers' assessment practices are an essential element for addressing students' learning needs, and they can ultimately improve the education system and accountability. Understanding teachers' assessment practices serves as a way of finding out if teachers adopt or use quality assessment methods to meet the learning needs of pupils(McMillan, 2001).

The role of student assessment at the national level in Nigeria's educational system is to generate information to be used for making "high stakes" decisions, such as selecting and placing pupilsin appropriate tertiary training programs. Student assessment in Nigeria at the school level also plays an important role of helping pupilsprepare for standardized examinations needed for those "high stakes" decisions. Few studies on teachers' classroom assessment practices have been conducted in Nigeria. This makes it difficult to have a clear understanding about the nature and magnitude of assessment issues of Nigeria teachers. This study will endeavour to bring an awareness regarding how Nigeria teachers generally perceive their classroom assessment practices.

1.2 Classroom Assessment

In order to understand what pupilsknow or do not know, educators need assessment. Classroom assessment is possibly the first and most

important part of the teaching and learning process that includes measurement, feedback, reflection, andchange. Classroom assessments play an important role as they are essential for generating information used for making educational decisions. Classroom assessments also serve many purposes for teachers such as: grading, identification of pupilswith special learning needs, student motivation, clarification of students' achievement expectations, and monitoring instructional effectiveness (Ohlsen, 2007; Stiggins, 2001). In order to be used as tools for students' learning, classroom assessments must be transformed in two fundamental ways, "First, the content and character of assessments must be significantly improved, and second, the gathering and use of assessment information and insights must become part of an ongoing learning process" (Sherpard, 2000, p. 5).

The purpose of classroom assessment is not just to generate information for decision making, but also to foster learning improvement. For this reason, if properly offered on a frequent basis it would help pupilsto refine and deepen their understanding of what they learn. Classroom assessments are also essential for conveying expectations that can stimulate learning (Wiggins, 1998). The more information we have about students, the clearer the picture we have about their achievement, learning challenges and where those challenges emanate. For this reason, there is a need to pay attention to how it is used, as failure to do this may lead to inaccurate assessment of students' achievement and may ultimately prevent pupilsfrom reaching their full academic potential (Stiggins, 2001).

Assessment of pupilsalso entails the use of high-stakes assessments, such as standardized national examinations. According to the American Educational Research Association, many states and school districts mandate testing programs to gather data about student achievement over time and to hold schools and pupilsaccountable. Certain uses of achievement test results are termed "high stakes" if they carry serious consequences for pupilsor for educators. Schools may be judged according to the school-wide average scores of their students. High school-wide scores may bring public praise or financial rewards; low scores may bring public embarrassment or heavy sanctions. For individual students, high scores may bring a special diploma attesting to exceptional academic accomplishment; low scores may result in pupilsbeing held back in grade or denied a high school diploma (AERA, 2000, para, 3).

These examinations are termed “high stakes” because it is through these forms of assessments that educators are able to make important educational decisions, such as graduation, and selection and placement of pupilsto different higher education fields (Reynolds, Livingstone, & Wilson, 2009). Assessment serves as an important deciding factor for the future of students’ learning outcomes. Educators must have a clear understanding of the assessment practices that teachers use as they assess students, and the assessment challenges teachers face. The most efficient way to measure, understand, and appreciate teachers’ assessment practices is to assess their perceptions about classroom assessment methods.

Rowntree (1987), is of the opinion that when assessing students, teachers should first identify the purpose of using assessments; specifically they should establish how they are going to use assessment results. Teachers should also establish the content of assessment. That is, they should be in a position to determine the kinds of skills and abilities they intend to assess. Teachers should establish how they will assess those skills. They should make decisions about the choice of assessment methods they want to employ and establish if such methods are relevant for assessing the specific content and effective to help pupilsreach their academic potential. Teachers should also make decisions about how they are going to grade, give pupilsfeedback, and how they will analyse interpret, and use assessment results to inform decisions in teaching and learning. As teachers assess students, they should ask themselves questions like; what is the purpose of assessing students? What kinds of skills are being assessed? How should classroom assessments be conducted? And how should assessment results be, analysed, interpreted, and used to inform educational decisions? Part of this study addresses the extent to which teachers' assessment practices fall within the framework highlighted in the above questions.

Institutions and professional bodies who conduct teachers' education and professional development need to know what teachers know and don't know about assessment, what teachers are using to assess students, and the kind of assessment skills they possess in order to effectively assess students. Curriculum developers and measurement specialists cannot expect teachers to use assessment techniques effectively without giving them proper training in educational assessment (Ayala, et al. 2008). The

induction of beginning teachers may be valuable to examine their assessment and grading practices to see if they are consistent with their philosophy of teaching and learning and other beliefs they have about student assessment (McMillan & Nash, 2000).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine assessment practices, skills, and beliefs about assessment of primary school teachers in ijebu ode local government. The study attempted to determine teachers' views about assessment, areas of classroom assessment practices that are utilized or under-utilized, and whether teachers' perceived skills match the frequency with which they use assessment practices. The study made comparisons based on teacher characteristics, such as training, grade level, and subject taught, and years of experience.

To fulfil this aim, the following objectives guided the research process:

(a) To obtain information about teachers' perceptions regarding the nature and quality of the assessment training they received,

(b) Determine teachers' beliefs about the purpose of classroom assessments,

(c) Examine assessment practices that teachers employ as they evaluate pupilslearning, and (d) Examine teachers' perceived assessment skills.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to fulfill these specific objectives, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the teachers' levels of agreement with factors concerning "thoughts on assessment "and how are these factors related?

2. Which areas of classroom assessment do teachers believe they are most skilled?

3. Which areas of classroom assessment do teachers' believe they use most?

4. How are teachers' perceptions about their skill and use of different areas of classroom assessment practices related?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Classroom assessment practices are based on teacher beliefs, training, knowledge and skills in educational assessment. Understanding teachers' classroom assessment practices remains pivotal for informed educational decisions that can be made about students' learning outcomes. The results of this study may provide valuable insights for understanding teachers' classroom assessment practices and needs for teachers in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Information obtained in this study can also be used for decision making such as evaluating the effectiveness of classroom assessment practices that teachers adopt as they evaluate student learning. Findings from this study may also add to a body of knowledge to the exiting assessment theory and practice within the

Nigeria education system and act as a framework for developing teacher preparation and professional development in the use of classroom assessments.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Classroom Assessment Practices: The term classroom assessment practices covers a wide range of issues starting from teachers' beliefs and the value they have regarding assessment of students, their perceptions about assessment training, their test planning, construction, to grading and use of assessment results (McMillan, 2008; Nitko, 2001; Popham, 2008; Reynolds, Livingstone & Wilson, 2009).

Teacher Made/Classroom Assessment: These are tests constructed, administered and graded by teachers as formative evaluation of student learning. They are used for purposes of monitoring students' learning and feedback.

Standardized Examinations: These are national examinations constructed by tests specialists used for making high-stakes decisions that include selection, and placement of pupils at higher levels of learning, they are summative in nature (Popham, 2008; Reynolds, Livingstone & Wilson, 2009).

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A Brief history of Student Assessment

Improving the academic achievement of pupils from primary to senior secondary schools has been a major concern of educators in different parts of the world. In the United States academic achievement of K-12 pupils has been addressed since the 1800s. Since that time, different educational innovations have been tested with a goal to enhance student achievement (Marzano, 2006). Resnick, (1982) pointed out that "test based reforms can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century when Massachusetts state superintendent of instruction used written examinations as a means of holding public schools accountable for their results (as cited in Miller, Linn, & Gronlund, 2009, p, 4).

Historically, teachers have used testing instruments to transmit to pupils and their parents what content and skills are really important for the pupils to know. Educators have had divided opinions on the best methods of assessing student learning outcomes. Although some educators advocate the use of traditional forms of assessments such as multiple choice tests and other forms of objective tests, others advocate for more contemporary approaches to assessments such as portfolios, journal critique, and research essays. Traditional forms of assessments are very efficient at measuring knowledge standards and targets, especially when there is much knowledge to be measured. Such tests are used for measuring students' knowledge, understanding, and application, which are essential skills that pupils need in order to succeed in their studies (MacMillan, 2008).

During the last decade alternative assessment methods were developed and implemented into educational practice as a result of new discoveries and changing theories in the field of student learning. These innovative methods in student assessment have been supported on the basis that they produce active, reflective, and self- regulating learners. These new methods of student assessment have brought a lot of changes in the way educators perceive student learning and assessment (Elango, Jutti, & Lee, 2005). As time went on, teachers were advised to change their focus and adopt alternative forms of assessments. The changing perspective was driven by the need to use classroom assessments that recognize, teach, and assess knowledge, skills, and abilities that pupils need beyond classroom environments. Authentic forms of assessments were therefore introduced because of their potential to test complex mental abilities like extended writing and problem solving skills that cannot be assessed by using traditional forms of assessments (Reynolds, Livingston, & Willson, 2009; Waldrip, Fishers, & Dorman, 2009).

2.2 The Role of Teacher-Made Classroom Assessment

Assessment is a systematic process for collecting information that can be used to make inferences about characteristics of people or objects (Reynolds, Livingstone, & Wilson, 2009). Assessment is not just about collecting data, but is also a processes used to appraise students' knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills and it is inextricably linked to a course or program's intended learning outcomes (Marriot & Lau, 2008). The overall scope of assessment can be viewed within five main dimensions:

(1) Why assess? Deciding why assessment is to be carried out and what outcomes the assessment is expected to produce. (2)What to assess? Deciding, realizing or otherwise coming to an awareness of what one is looking for in people being assessed. (3)How to assess? Selecting from among available means, those assessments we regard as being most truthful and fair for various sorts of valued knowledge. (4) How to interpret? Making sense of the outcomes of the observations or measurement or impressions we gather through whatever means we employ; explaining, appreciating, and attaching meaning to the raw 'events' of assessments. (5) How to respond? Finding appropriate ways of expressing our response to whatever has been assessed and communicating it to those concerned. (Rowntree, 1977, p. 11)

These dimensions make an important contribution to the framework in which classroom assessment practices should be viewed. All these are a clear indication that classroom assessments play an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Teachers have a wide range of classroom assessment methods to employ. These methods provide teachers with access to powerful assessment of students' learning.

Through classroom assessments, teachers collect various forms of information in order to make informed, consistent, and appropriate judgments regarding students' learning outcomes. Teachers and school administrators are the main decision makers on the forms of assessment and specific assessment tasks employed in schools (Cavanagh, Waldrip, Romanoski, Dorman, & Fisher, 2005). Teachers control classroom assessment environments by choosing how they assess their students, the frequency of these assessments, how and when they give pupilsfeedback.

McMillan, (2008) found that assessment of pupils at classroom level is very critical because effective decision making is based to some extent on the ability of teachers to understand their pupils and to match actions with accurate assessments.

2.3 The Role of "High Stakes" or Standardized Assessments

Standardized assessments are types of assessments designed to yield some norm- referenced or criterion-referenced inferences; these assessments are usually administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard manner. They can be distributed by commercial test developers or by government owned test developing bodies. The main objective of these assessments is to provide a norm-referenced interpretation (McMillan, 2008; Popham, 2008; Reynolds, Livingstone & Wilson, 2009). The central focus of high stakes or standardized examination is also to establish a common set of academic standards for all pupils taking the examination. These assessments can also be used to measure students' performance and to ensure accountability of educational systems that are focused on students' learning outcomes (Glaser & Silver, 1994). Nigeria like many countries all over the world, have high stakes assessments. These examinations are called "high stakes" because pupils will not advance to a higher level of education unless they do well in them. They are also called high stakes because the information collected from these assessments are used to make high stake decisions such as selection and placement of pupils into higher educational levels. The information collected from these assessments is needed to inform both policy and practice in education. What must be realized is that high-stakes assessments are there to stay, at least for the foreseeable future.

What is of great importance is for policy makers and educational practitioners to ensure that the use of these assessments is monitored on a continuous basis to make sure that their use benefit pupils and their teachers. Measures must be put in place to support teachers as they prepare pupils for these assessments.

That is, systems must be in place to ensure that pupils are motivated by developing better curriculum, instructional and assessment methods that can benefit pupils(Goertz & Duffy, 2003).

2.4 Classroom Assessments Practices

Student assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Teachers play a major role in this process, for this reason, their competencies and knowledge skills in classroom assessment practices are critical. Teachers are considered a cornerstone for bringing change and preparing pupils for future endeavours. It is very essential to understand their teaching practices particularly how they assess and evaluate student learning outcomes. For this reason, (Reynolds, Livingston, & Willson, 2009; McMillan, 2008; Nitko, 2001) maintain the common argument that classroom assessment plays an important role in schools and as teachers spend a lot of their time engaged in assessment- related activities they should master some basic assessment competencies. Teachers struggle as they try to improve their assessment practices and make assessment decisions, mainly because the whole process is characterized by the tension between teachers' beliefs about assessments and the values they bring along, as well as other external forces that they have to consider along the way (McMillan, 2003).

Teachers often have major constraints as they attempt to achieve their aspirations across a wide range of teaching practices. Teachers use some

level of expertise to work within the challenging environment of classrooms for purposes of bringing their teaching and assessment practices in line with their values.

For more than three decades, researchers have been conducting research meant to shed some light in the understanding of the nature and scope of teacher classroom assessment practices. There is evidence that teachers lack an adequate knowledge base regarding testing and measurement procedures. In their study, Daniel and King (1998) acknowledged findings made by Schafer and Lissirz (1987) who more than a decade earlier hoped that teachers' knowledge of testing and measurement would improve. A decade later, Daniel and King (1998) found that teachers still lacked an adequate knowledge base regarding testing and measurement procedures. Another decade later researchers found that when evaluating students' academic learning, teachers failed to adhere to recommended classroom assessment practices (Campbell & Evans, 2000).

Previous research does confirm that teachers' classroom assessment practices have been taken for granted. Educators place more focus on research meant to improve the use and quality of standardized examinations and have placed minimal attention on the quality of classroom assessments. "Measurement professionals are more interested on issues related to test development and the technical quality of standardized measures than in classroom assessment and grading practices" (Smith, 2003, p. 99). This state of affairs leads to many arguments regarding how educators view students' assessment practices. For instance, Ohlsen (2007) states that policymakers support the use of high-stakes testing as the measure of student and school achievement despite serious reservations on the part of the educational classroom

assessment. Barsdale-Ladd and Thomas (2000) conducted a study with in-service teachers and they identified some essential aspects of classroom assessment competencies that teachers should adopt as they assess students. They indicated that teachers should: (i) provide pupils with feedback for purposes of improving students' learning, (ii) take assessment as part of a students' work,

(iii) exercise some level of flexibility in assessment so as to ensure that assessment does not dominate the curriculum, (iv) ensure that assessment informs instruction to improve teachers' instructional methods, and (v) use multiple assessment methods to evaluate students' learning. Vandeyar and Killen, (2003) argued that regardless of educational setting, high-quality assessment practices should satisfy essential principles such as validity, reliability, fairness, discrimination, and meaningfulness. For Vandeyar and Killen, if teachers have a clear understanding of these principles, they can have an informed framework of using assessment results to make better informed decisions from assessment results. When teachers misunderstand these principles, their assessment practices are more likely to generate worthless information.

2.5 Goal Orientations and their Implications to Classroom Assessment.

Recent research work on achievement goals made recommendations to treat mastery and performance orientations as similar construct based on their level of overlap (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Contrasting arguments on how these constructs should be viewed have been made. For instance, Meece, Anderman and Anderman (2006) made a contention that mastery orientation should be viewed as an individuals' ability to master new skills, attempt to accomplish something new and challenging, and

understand the content being taught. Success under mastery orientation is evaluated in terms of self-improvement and the quality of work that pupils present. Contrary to this, performance orientation should be viewed as a normative standard, where students' ability is gauged relative to the ability of others. Ability to out-perform others is encouraged. Success is evaluated on the basis of doing better than others.

A number of studies have shown that certain classroom practices that encourage mastery orientation enhanced positive achievement goals. For instance, in one study, (Ryan & Patrick, 1997) assessed pupils perceptions in how school environment in their classroom related to changes in motivation and their engagement in learning. Results of this study showed those students' perceptions of teacher support and teacher promoting interactions were related to positive changes. On the other hand, students' perception of teacher promoting performance goals were related to negative changes in students' motivation.

Kaplan, Gheen, and Midley (2002) echoed similar sentiments when they argued that emphasis on mastery and performance goals in the classroom is related to students' patterns of learning behaviours. This argument was based on the study that Kaplan and others (2002) conducted to determine the extent at which goal structure is related to incidents of disruptive behaviours in the classrooms. This study showed that personal mastery goals were related to lower reports of disruptive behaviours. Aggregated students' perceptions on mastery goal structure were related to lower behavioural incidences. On the contrary, personal performance approach as well as performance avoidance goals were related to higher reports of disruptive behaviours. Similarly, students' perceptions of performance approach goal were related to incidents of disruptive behaviour.

Meece, Anderman and Anderman (2006) in support of arguments raised by Ryan and Patrick (1997) and Kaplan, Gheen, and Midley (2002) pointed out that pupilswho perceive their school environment as focused on competition for grades and social comparisons of ability were more likely to adopt performance orientations. However, pupilswho view their school environments as focused on encouraging them to attain new skill, and accomplish more challenges are more likely to adopt mastery orientation goals. All these are an indication that classroom goal structures that inform certain practices (instructional or assessment) can have major implications on students' behaviour and learning as they can shape the type of goals pupilsare likely to adopt.

Rubie-Davies et al., (2011) conducted a study to explore relationships between the teacher characteristics of gender and teaching experience, school contextual variables (socio-economic level of school and class level), and three teacher socio- psychological variables. These variables were class level teacher expectations, teacher efficacy, and teacher goal orientation and the study was conducted with a sample of teachers from rural and urban areas in New Zealand. Results of this study revealed that mastery orientation was a predictor of teacher efficacy for student engagement, and classroom management. On the other hand, teacher characteristics were related to school contexts. Gender, particularly male, was related to performance orientations. These studies taken collectively do show the effects that goal orientated teachers' can have on their classroom practices and how these can particularly impact on students' learning.

2.6 Grading Practices

The grading systems that teachers use in different countries should not be seen as isolated practices, but should be viewed in the context of educational systems in which they are used. To account for the dimensionality and variability of how teachers conduct their grading practices, it becomes imperative to take into account the context of educational systems where teachers implement such practices, as well as the purpose of the grading system where such grading practices are taking place. Teachers must first decide the purpose grades will serve even before they choose the grading method therefore grading should also be based on a defined plan. Such a grading plan must meet the needs of both the teacher and student (Hammons & Barnsley, 1992).

MacMillan and Nash (2000) argued that grading students' work can be a complex process as it is guided by an array of issues such as; results that come from assessments, teachers' beliefs and values, and overall learning goals. Part of grading practices entails the process of giving pupilsfeedback. It must be understood that grades form an important process in student assessment. Grades can have major life implications as individuals or pupilsmay have certain perceptions about them. Grades also have ethical implications because they are concerned with fairness and the rights of students. The legitimacy of grades is entirely dependent on the grading practices that teachers adopt.

They should be reliable, valid, comparable, and fair (McMillan, 2008; Miller, Linn, & Grounlund, 2009; Popham, 2008; Reynolds, Livingston, & Willson, 2009). Giving pupilsfeedback is central to students' education as it promotes learning and ensures that educational standards are met. Blatt (2005) states that feedback is meant to be a guidance system that

keeps pupilson track of how to learn and master the subject matter. Unfortunately, giving quality feedback to pupilsis a difficult component of teaching such that teachers often avoid this aspect of grading process (Hewson & Little, 1998). For feedback to be effective, it should be prompt, closely follow the event, contain encouragement, be specific about why something was good or not. It should not focus on too many different aspects at the same time. It should be clear, and focus on the work done by the student, and not on the student (Crooks, 1988; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Rogers, 2001).

In an attempt to explore grading practices, issues of judgment, communication, and character development in grading through a framework which exposes the underlying moral issues in grading, (Zoeckler, 2007) examined how teachers arrived at a fair grade while weighing both achievement and non-achievement factors. The role of teacher expectations were also examined using a theoretical framework which considers grading processes in terms of truth, worthwhileness, trust, and intellectual and moral attentiveness. Zoeckler (2007) collected data from rural high school teachers in upstate New York through interviews. What emerged in this study was that teachers continue to struggle with issues of fairness as they grade students' work. The main argument that Zoeckler made was that teachers' grading and feedback to pupilsis influenced by teachers' values and beliefs. Zoeckler argued that even though teachers' moral issues in assessment often go unexplained, they play a major role in the assessment practices they adopt.

McMillan and Nash (2000) studied reasons teachers give for their assessment and grading practices and the factors that influence such practices. In this study, interviews with teachers revealed that decision

making about grading was influenced by the desire to use grading practices that encourage student engagement, motivation, and understanding. Most teachers in McMillan and Nash's study viewed grading as a larger part of philosophy of teaching and learning that needs to accommodate individual differences.

Teachers saw the use of non-achievement practices, such as effort, as a way to judge motivation and engagement, while ability and improvement were consistent with broader beliefs about the importance of individual differences amongst students.

Lekoko and Koloi (2007) conducted a survey with pre-service teachers enrolled in education classes at the University of Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to explore students' perceptions regarding the correlation of teacher's feedback and the grades that teachers award to students. Pupilsrevealed some experiences regarding how their work is graded and the nature of feedback they receive from their lecturers. This study showed that when lecturers grade students' work they did not provide adequate comments that could help pupilsunderstand where they went wrong, teachers gave low marks that are not accounted for in terms of what and how the teacher arrived at the marks, there was no reconciliation of marks and comments accompanying them, and teachers made ticks that were incompatible with the marks given. The main argument that Lekoko and Koloi (2007) made in this study was that when there is a discrepancy between teachers' comments and grades that pupilsreceive, pupilsare left frustrated as this robs themof the potential to improve in their learning. For this reason, it is essential that teachers should be given sufficient assessment training that would enhance their

grading practices and equip them with skills of giving effective, efficient, and useful feedback to students.

In sharing a narrative perspective on views about grading and giving pupilsfeedback Wormeli (2006) contends that "Assessment and feedback, particularly during the course of learning, are the most effective ways for pupilsto learn accountability in their work and in their personal lives" (p. 14). Wormeli stressed the need for teachers to use grading and feedback practices that can best serve the interests of students. Some of the recommendations that Wormeli made were that when grading and giving pupilsfeedback, teachers should clearly show what pupilsdid, what they were supposed to do, and then help them compare and contrast the two.

McMillan (2008) conducted a study to document the differences in actual assessment and grading practices conducted for a specific class taught by teachers across a range of subjects. Results of the study revealed that secondary school teachers use a multitude of factors when grading pupilswork. A mixture of factors to determine grades were organized into four clearly distinct components: academic achievement, academic enablers (such as effort, ability, improvement, and participation), use of external benchmarks, and use of extra credit and borderline cases). Academic achievement was considered to be the most important process in grading students' work. Two thirds of teachers who participated in this study were reported to have agreed with the use of academic enablers (effort, ability, and improvement) when grading students' work. Teachers defend their choice to use non-achievement factors, such as effort, because they see them as some form of borderline to determine grades; and that suchfactors are good proxy for student achievement. Both

primary school teachers have been found to use non-achievement factors when they award grades to their pupilsto raise or lower grades except in borderline cases, they were also found to reward hard work by raising borderline grades and some would lower borderline grades for lack of effort (Cross, Robert, Frary, & Weber, 1993).

Some educators, however, discourage the use of non-achievement factors but place more emphasis on the use of achievement related factors (Airasian, 1994; Popham, 2008; Stiggins, Frisbie, & Griswold, 1989). Arguments raised by these educators are based on the fact that "interpretations of grades can be more clear if grades are limited to measured achievement at a given time, and that it may be impossible to make valid and reliable assessments based on ability, growth, and effort" (Cross, Robert,Frary, & Weber, 1993). They also argued that the use of non-achievement factors have major learning implications particularly on low performing pupilswho may give effort more value over mastery of content and skill attainment (McMillan & Nash, 2000).

2.7 Use of Assessment Information.

Assessment entails a broad spectrum of activities that includes collection of information for decision making. The responsibility of teachers is to collect information through various assessment methods that can be used to make informed decisions about students' learning progress. The question is; are teachers competent enough to use or apply assessment information for making students' learning decisions? Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003) argued that to be able to communicate assessment results more effectively, teachers must possess a clear

understanding about the limitations and strengths of various assessment methods.

Teachers must also use proper terminology as they use assessment results to inform other people about the decisions about student learning. Stiggings (2004) echoed the same sentiments by arguing that in the past, schools were designed to use assessment results to sort pupilsfrom the lowest to the highest achievers. When assessment information was used this way, many pupils did not perform well and had a sense of hopelessness in learning. However, over the past few decades the mission of sorting pupils in rank order has evolved into missions of "no child left behind" where teachers are held accountable for ensuring that all pupils are accorded the chance to meet their educational potentials. Teachers used assessment information to identify students' learning needs "As teachers diagnose student needs, design and implement instructional interventions, evaluate student work, and assign grades, they need continuous access to evidence of student learning arising from high-quality classroom assessment practices" (Stiggings,2004, pp. 25-26).

Teachers depend on the classroom assessment information to improve their instructional methods, and as such, that information plays an important role in student learning. It is apparent that teachers should be competent in the collection, analysis and use of assessment information. Some professional bodies such as the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (1990) devised a set of standards that could guide teachers' assessment practices. These bodies recommended that teachers should be skilled in: (a) choosing assessment methods that are appropriate for making instructional decisions, (b) developing all types of

assessments, (c) administering, scoring, analyzing, and interpreting assessment results developed from teacher-made assessment procedures, (d) developing assessment procedures needed to make informed decisions, (e) developing justifiable and fair assessment procedures, for grading pupilswork, (f) communicating assessment results to students, parents and other relevant stakeholders, and
(g) recognizing and exercising ethical standards when assessing students.

2.8 Statistical Applications.

Teachers are an integral part of students' education. They use various assessment methods to collect information to be used for making decisions about students' learning progress. Teachers need to have basic understanding of how to collect, analyses, and interpret assessment information to make informed decisions. Assessment information is fundamental as it can help teachers understand how they construct classroom assessments for evaluating students' learning (McMillan, Myran & Workman, 2002). What should be realized is that classroom assessment information that teachers collect does not only benefit students, but also helps teachers to evaluate their teaching practices by finding out what they taught well and what they need to modify. Some researchers argue that the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting assessment information does not necessarily require sophisticated statistical analysis of assessment results. They instead argue that what teachers need is to make simple tallies of how many pupilsmissed each assessment item or failed to meet a specific criterion. These simple tallies only require teachers to have basic statistical competencies (Guskey, 2003). Although this statement may be true to

some extent, what is essential is to determine if teachers need to use statistical techniques for analyzing and interpreting assessment information. If so, which ones do they require, how competent are they in using these procedures, and how often do they use such procedures?

Testing Practices. Planning and developing classroom assessment tasks requires teachers to make a number of decisions, such as determining the purpose of the assessments, making decisions on how to use assessment results, making decisions about the content to be included in test, determining the instructional objectives (skills) to be measured, identifying the type of assessment formats to be used, deciding on a number of items to be used, determining how student's responses will be graded (McMillan, 2008; Nitko, 2001; Popham, 2008; Reynolds, Livingstone & Wilson, 2009). Stiggins (1994) argued that building a test without a plan is like building a house without a blueprint.

Stigging's view is that two things will happen, test construction process may take much longer than anticipated and the final product may or may not be what the teachers had hoped. This clearly indicates that teachers need more guidance for them to be more competent in basic test planning and construction methods.

Campbell and Evans (2000) evaluated assessment practices of pre-service teachers who had just completed a course in educational measurement. The authors reviewed 309 pre-service student teacher lesson plans, and found that none contained all of the necessary criteria established as necessary for evaluating students' learning.

Student-teachers failed to use test planning practices such as a table of specifications, which is necessary to make a direct link between instructional goals and test items. The authors believed that by omitting

test planning practices, pre-service teachers were unable to explicitly document the association between curriculum goals, instruction, and student achievement.

One of the essential steps in assessment practices that is often taken for granted but serve an important role is for teachers to make decisions as to why they are assessing students. Teachers may want to make a decision to use assessment information to diagnose students' learning problems, guide and improve future instructional methods, or just for summative evaluation to determine students' final grades at the end of the term (Airasian, 1994; Gronlund & Waugh, 2009; McMillan, 2005; Popham, 2006; Reynolds, Livingston, & Willson, 2009). Airasian (1994) devised a list of decisions that teachers should make as they embark in their classroom process. Airasian encouraged teachers to base their decisions on the following: What to test, how much emphasis to give to each instructional objective, what type of assessment tasks, (tests, projects, assignments) to use, how much time to allocate for each assessment task, how to prepare pupilsfor the assessments, and whether or not to use tests from textbooks, or construct their own tests. Other important factors that teachers must take into consideration when planning tests include; subject matter domain assessed, test constructor or user such as (ease of test preparation, ease of scoring test, etc.), and various extraneous factors for instance (guessing, copying, bluffing) possibly affecting the psychometric properties of test scores (Zeidner, 1987, p. 352).

Some researchers argued that the level at which teachers design, develop, embed, and implement classroom assessment practices is not clearly articulated. For this reason, Ayala et al., (2008) outlined five critical activities that comprise the phase of embedded assessment development

that teachers can adopt as they design, develop, embed, and implement classroom assessment practices. These include: (1) Mapping and experiencing the curricular unit in which the classroom assessments will to be embedded, (2) Determining the unit goal to be assessed, (3) Determining the critical points where the assessments should be embedded, (4) Defining the assessment development guidelines, and (5) Developing the assessments.

On the same note, Stiggins (1994) added other effective types of test planning activities that teachers can choose from to improve their assessment practices. Stiggins argued that teachers can use a table of specification, a two-way table that matches the objectives or content teachers taught with the level at which they expect pupilsto perform. It contains an estimate of the percentage of the test to be allocated to each topic at each level at which it is to be measured. Teachers can also rely on a list of instructional objectives to guide their test construction process. Teachers can match the instructional objectives with assessment tasks (tests, assignments, projects).

All these steps are essential for planning assessment tasks, however, the single most important test planning and construction process that teachers must understand is how to design appropriate learning objectives also known as learning outcomes, which specify what the teachers want pupilsto know or be able to do at the end of the course or at the end of a unit, topic, term, or a class activity. Everything that goes on the course including instructional methods used, assessment methods used (tests, assignments, projects) are driven by learning objectives. For this reason, teachers must have a good understanding of how to construct specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and student- centered instructional

objectives (Airasian, 1994; Gronlund & Waugh, 2009; McMillan, 2005; Popham, 2008; Reynolds, Livingston, & Willson, 2009).

2.9 Teacher Beliefs about Classroom Assessment Practices.

"Teacher beliefs" is a term that has been viewed with differing perspectives because of its complexity. For instance, Oliver and Koballa, (1992) conducted a study where they asked teachers to give a definition of "teacher beliefs". Teachers gave differing perspectives; some associated "belief" with other psychological constructs such as knowledge, values, and attitudes. Others viewed "belief" as a process that influences their behaviours, attitudes, and practices. Some researchers simply concluded that because of its complexity, the term "teacher beliefs" cannot be defined easily (Cantu, 2001).

McMillan and Nash (2000) held a discussion with teachers regarding their beliefs, values and purpose of classroom assessments as well as their grading practices. This discussion showed that teacher beliefs and values were not directly linked with measurement principles. Rubie-Davies, Flint, and McDonald (2011) argued that even though teacher beliefs have been found to play a major role in influencing their thoughts and behaviours that contribute to student learning outcomes; they are less studied, compared to students' beliefs. A practice that McMillan (2005) and Popham (2008) argued against as they assert that research on teacher beliefs must be intensified and conducted on continuous basis, particularly because understanding teacher beliefs can lead to better ways of understanding their classroom practices.

Regardless of these mixed perceptions and misconceptions surrounding the concept of teacher beliefs, some researchers hold the view that

“teacher beliefs” form an important process as they are associated with what they know or perceive as important. This may influence how teachers conceptualize their work and contribute to decisions, behaviours and practices they display in their daily classroom activities (Boog, 2003; Mansour, 2009). Teacher “beliefs” play an integral role in teaching and learning that include assessment practices that teachers adopt (Fang, 1996). Based on their beliefs, teachers adopt various assessment practices, indicating that such practices are not constant, but keep on changing, making it pertinent to study them on continuous basis (McMillan, 2008; Popham, 2008).

The complexity of “teacher beliefs” has led to ways of understanding assessment practices adopted by different groups of teachers. Based on their belief about classroom assessments, teachers can be classified into three main sub-categories. The first group is made up of realists. Realist teachers believe in the use of paper and pencil types of assessments where learners are expected to recognize rather than generate their own answers (Segers & Dochy, 2001; Windschitl, 1999, Nitko, 1994). These types of assessments are focused on improving the cognitive side of instruction, i.e. the skills and knowledge that pupilsare expected to develop within a short period of time (Segers & Dochy, 2001). Realist teachers by nature believe in norm-referenced testing. In norm-referenced testing students’ mastery of core knowledge and skills of the curriculum and is evaluated relative to the performance of others (Nitko, 1994). Realists’ teachers tend to rely more on paper and pencil objective tests that can be scored easily and be used to compare students.

The second group of teachers is made up of contextual teachers, who are more likely to use alternative assessments such as student portfolios,

group-work assessments and performance based assessments. Contextual teachers believe that there is a changing perspective in classroom assessments. The changing perspective is driven by the need to use classroom assessments that recognize, teach and assess knowledge, skills, and abilities that pupilsneed beyond class environments. Contextual teachers believe that overreliance on the use of traditional methods of assessments such as multiple choice tests, true or false and other related types of tests only measure the recall of knowledge instead of higher level learning skills. They advocate for the increased use of performance testing that seem better suited for testing complex mental abilities like extended writing and problem solving skills (Haladyna, Downing & Rodriguez, 2002). Contextual teachers are more likely to use criterion based testing evaluation to determine what pupilsknow and don't know based on a set criterion (Tzuriel, 2000; Nitko, 1994).

The third group of teachers is made up of relativists. They base their assessment practices on the developmental theory. They believe that children learn best in classrooms or environments where instruction is developmentally appropriate. They take into account that pupilsdevelopmental levels vary. Relativists teachers believe that children have opportunities to learn and be assessed in different ways to address the learning mode that is most appropriate for each child's unique developmental level (Schunk, 2008; Siegeler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2003; Steinberg, 2008). As they believe that pupilshave different learning needs, relativist teachers therefore use multiple assessment practices that accommodate students' diverse needs such as written tests, oral presentations, visual, technological presentations, drama, media and so on (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001).

2.10 Title's Theory for Classroom Assessment Practice.

Teacher beliefs can be conceptualized within the framework and theory of Title (1994) which she developed to guide assessment practices in classrooms. This theory emphasizes the following dimensions about classroom assessment practices: (a) Interpretation and knowledge, beliefs, intents, and actions, and (b) Assessment characteristics, embeddedness in practice, format and mode, scoring, evaluation, preparation and feedback. Title (1994) also points out that there are two things essential to know about assessment knowledge related to teaching, and knowledge about assessment process.

Teachers' self-knowledge of classroom assessment practices play a major role in this study as it covers a wide range of issues and teachers' belief systems. For instance, teachers may have construed meanings about professional expectations, standards, values, and their personal effectiveness as well as construed beliefs about assessment.

Furthermore, teacher belief systems were found to be integral part of informing their general teaching practices.

Teachers are likely to hold beliefs about assessment on pupilsbefore assessment (provide a focus of learning), knowledge about assessment effects on pupilsduring assessments (provide a sense of accomplishment, challenge, failure, or inadequacy), and knowledge about assessment effects on pupilsafter assessments (as fair, meaningful, useful providing information for continuing development or lack of it). Teachers may also have beliefs about the effects of assessment on teachers themselves, such as requiring instructions on particular topics or problems or providing or not providing useful information for instruction (Title, 1994, p. 152).

2.11 Relating Assessment Practices to Teacher Characteristics

Zhan and Burry-Stock (2003) argued that assessment is a process that entails a lot of activities. As teachers have different teaching responsibilities, their involvement and use of assessment practices are more likely to differ. For this reason, they hold differing perspectives on the arguments made by Adams and Hsu (1998) and Stiggins and Conklin (1992) who made a compelling argument that teachers with varying characteristics such as teaching level and subject taught, may have different explanations for varying results in assessment practices. Based on these counter-arguments, Zhan and Burry -Stock conducted a study to examine a broad spectrum of classroom assessment practices across teaching levels and content areas. They found that the higher the grade levels the more teachers used objective type of items and teachers with assessment training had higher perceived skills in assessment practices even after controlling teaching experience.

2.12 Role of Student Assessment in Nigeria

Nigeria government supports universal access to primary education. The main objective of primary education is for children to gain basic literacy skills in the national language and English (the official language). Other goals are for children to become knowledgeable in mathematics and to have a command of science and social studies skills. After completing six years of primary education, children take a national standardized examination (Primary School Leaving Examination. This standardized examination was originally a selection test but has since been developed into a criterion-referenced test meant to measure their competency level before they proceed to junior secondary school which takes three years.

The Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) assesses achievement of pupilswho have completed the last three years of the ten year basic education program. The examination and curriculum emphasizes general understanding and application of higher order thinking skills such as development of inquiry, decision making, reasoning, creativity, problem solving, process skills, as well as acquisition of hands on experiences. Pupilsat this level may study a number of subjects such as mathematics, English, integrated science, social studies, design and technology, agriculture, home economics, business subjects, art, religious education, moral education, French, music and physical education (Nigeria Examination Council, 2009). This examination is norm-referenced because it is used to select pupilsfor senior secondary school. Only those children, who pass their (JCE) or those who obtain higher grades proceed to senior secondary schools. To show overall performance, pupilsare awarded grades with merit as the highest grade that pupilscan obtain followed by Grade A and grade D as the lowest. A high number of pupilsdo not do very well during this important standardized examination. pupilswho obtain merit to grade B have a higher chance of being admitted to senior secondary school. Some pupilswho get grade C may proceed to senior secondary schools depending on availability of spaces and the quality of the grade that pupilsobtain. None of those who obtain a grade D proceed to senior secondary schools. The big question is, where do they go? Most of these children remain out of school unless they get a chance to attend a community based vocational school with private funding from their parents. Another question is what happens to thousands of children who come from poor families and cannot afford to pay for private education for their children? These are some of the issues

that are more likely to prevent Nigeria to reach its long term goal “to have an educated and informed nation by 2016”.When pupilspass their junior secondary school examination, they proceed to senior secondary school. Senior secondary school takes two years to complete and pupilssit for Nigeria General Certificate in Secondary Education (BGCSE), a syllabus based examination. Each syllabus according to Nigeria Examination Council (2009) is graded on an 8 point scale from A* to G. Candidates who fail to reach the standard required Grade G are regarded as “unclassified” and no result is reported on their certificates. All these structures are supported by the Nigeria Examination Council (BEC), which was mandated under section 5 of Nigeria Examination Act No. 11 of 2002, and has an overall mandate of taking care of all national examination issues or any other examination activities for Ministry of Education; the mission of (BEC) is “to advance the quality of education through effective and responsive assessment practices.

Academic performance of children at senior secondary schools forms a major foundation in helping institutions of higher education to make decisions on selection and admittance. Only those who satisfy certain set standards will be admitted into programs at the University of Nigeria, and others may qualify for admissions into other institutions of higher learning, such as Nigeria Institute of Health Sciences, Nigeria Teachers Training Colleges, and NigeriaCollege of Agriculture. In most cases, these institutions have very limited spaces, such that thousands of children are left out of college every year.

2.13 Teachers' classroom assessment practices in Nigeria

It is now over a decade since Nigeria stipulated its own Vision 2016 which emphasizes the need for quality education for its sustainable development and other educational reforms. Regardless of these, there is no clear indication that enough is being done to address teachers' classroom assessment practices so that they can be aligned with the stipulated reforms. Generally Nigeria teachers still continue to rely heavily on the use of multiple choice types of tests and other forms of traditional assessment to assess students' learning, paying minor attention to other forms of assessment such as alternative assessments (Kesianye & Deurwaarder, 2000). Stiggings (1994) argued that alternative assessments focus on processes and rationales with alternative assessment there is no single correct answer, instead pupilsare led to craft polished, thorough, and justifiable responses; performances, and products. Alternative assessments allow pupilsto construct original responses, and require pupilsto respond to a small number of more significant tasks rather than respond to a large number of less significant tasks. Thus, rather than answering 50 multiple choice items on a conventional chemistry examination, pupilswho are being assessed via performance tasks may find themselves asked to perform an actual experiment in a chemistry class, then prepare a written interpretation of the experiment results and an analytic critique of the procedure they used (Popham, 2008). The definition for alternative assessments indicates the need to reconsider their adoption and use to enhance the quality of education in Nigeria. That is, if teachers were using alternative assessments, the curriculum that they use should not be examination-driven, which is the case in Nigeria (Tabulawa, 1998).

A study was conducted to determine the extent to which primary school teachers in Nigeria and Nigeria perceive the six levels of Bloom's cognitive behaviour, as different from the extent to which they enhance quality basic education. They were also to ascertain the level to which their classroom assessment practices make use of items that adequately measure these cognitive behaviours. The study showed some significant discrepancy between how teachers perceived each level of Bloom cognitive behaviour and how they enhance quality education and the level to which their classroom assessment practices are able to provide skills needed for the development of cognitive behaviours among learners. This study revealed that most of the teachers still showed lack of basic knowledge and competencies in using recommended assessment techniques. A clear indication that a lot still needs to be done to improve assessment training for teachers in most of the African countries, including Nigeria (Nenty, Adeyemi, Odili, & Major, 2007). This state of affairs leads to many arguments regarding how educators view student assessment practices. Ohlsen (2007) stated that policymakers and the public support the use of high-stakes testing as the measure of student and school achievement despite serious reservations on the part of the educational classroom assessment. Stiggings (2001) is of the opinion that policy makers, school leaders, and the measurement community have neglected classroom assessments. This neglect, Stiggins believes has led to low assessment literacy for teachers and school administrators. Ultimately this has resulted in inaccurate assessment of achievement and ineffective feedback for students.

One of the controversial issues that has been discussed and seen to impact on the quality of assessment practices adopted by teachers is their

common practice of adopting assessment methods that were used on them as students. Stiggins (2001) argues against this practice and stresses the need for teachers to refrain from it. The primary premise of Stiggins argument is that it is as if someone out there has declared that it is human and natural for teachers to stay within the old assessment comfort zone rather than learn to assess the value, relevance and quality of assessment methods even before they adopt them for use in their classroom assessment practices. For this reason, Stiggins (2001) advocates for the change in current assessment practices and urges teachers and educators to pay special attention to the kinds of assessment methods that are used and adopt them to help learners meet their educational potentials.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A survey design was adopted to gather descriptive and comparative data for the purpose of describing the characteristics of several groups of teachers (Mertens, 2010). Surveys can be a powerful and useful tool for collecting data on human characteristics, such as their beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and behavior (Dillman, Smtyth, & Christian, 2009; Doyle, 2002; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009; Mertens, 2010), hence the survey design fit very well within the framework of this study.

3.2 Setting

The study was conducted in Ogun state public primary schools. Public schools in Nigeria are divided into three major levels; primary schools (equivalent to US elementary schools), junior secondary schools (equivalent of US middle schools) and senior secondary schools (equivalent of US high schools). The Directory of Nigeria Primary Schools (2010) indicates that there are ten primary school regions with a total of forty inspectoral areas.

3.3 Description of Participants and Sampling Protocol

The subject population for this study was teachers that teach at primary schools. The teachers who teach in these schools have different levels of teacher training. Those who teach at the primary school level may have a certificate in primary education, a diploma in primary education or a

degree in primary education. Primary school teachers teach one standard (grade) in a given year, and they teach all the subjects.

3.4 Teacher Sample

One of the most important processes in sampling in a survey design is to determine the sample size that can be representative of the population from which it was drawn. In a quantitative research design, if the sample is well selected, the results of the study should be generalizable to the population (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009; Mertens, 2010; Dillman, Smtyth, & Christian, 2009). Different techniques can be used to ensure that the sample is representative, these techniques include determining the sample size, properly defining the population, avoiding sampling error and bias (Dillman, Smtyth, & Christian, 2009; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009; Mertens, 2010). Determining sample size is concerned with how much data is required to make appropriate decisionson a particular study. If there is enough data, the amount of error is more likely to be reduced (Abraham & Russell, 2008).

To ensure that teachers who participated in the study represented all relevant subgroups, the sample of teachers based on their training, grade level, and subject taught, years of experience and school level was selected (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009; Mertens, 2010). All teachers in the selected schools were asked to participate in the study, and 691 agreed to participate. The sample of teachers was fairly well representative of the local government.

(see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Frequency Table of Demographic Variables

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Primary	265	38
Teaching standard/form		
Lower primary	66	10
Middle primary	76	11
Upper primary	120	17

Note. N = 265

3.5 Description of Instrument

The Classroom Assessment Practices and Skills (CAPS) questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. The items in the questionnaire were developed from assessment textbooks. In order to ensure that the questionnaire was properly designed, thefive basic steps as outlined by Spector, 1992 was followed. First, the construct of interest, in this case, classroom assessment practices, was defined. Second, the response format was decided based on the nature of the items. The idea was for the responses to be quantifiable. Third, the questionnaire was piloted with 15 primary school teachers. The questionnaire is divided into three main sections. The first section of the questionnaire contained six close-ended-items that measured the background of the participants. The second section contained two close-ended items that measured assessment methods and types of items used by the teachers. The third section had 34 Likert-type items on classroom assessment practices. These included items on preparing assessment (items 1 - 16), test administration (items 17 - 19), grading (items 20 - 24), feedback (items 25 - 28), fairness (29 - 31), and analysis (items 32 – 34) (MacMillan, 2008; Popham, 2008; Reynolds, Livingstone & Wilson, 2009; Stiggins, 1994).

The initial set of items in the second and third sections of the questionnaire were adopted from Assessment Practices Inventory (API, Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003). This instrument was created and used in the United States of America to measure teachers' skills and use of assessment practices across teaching levels, content areas, and teachers self-perceived assessment skills as a function of teaching experience.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha was conducted to determine the reliability of the web-based questionnaire. An overall reliability coefficient of 0.749 was obtained. Although several authors (Bland and Altman (1997), DeVellis, (2003), Bastick and Matalon, (2004), Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) have reported different levels of alpha ranging from 0.70 to 0.95. For instance, Bastick and Matalon 2004, recommended 0.75 as the minimum acceptable alpha level, while Nunnally and Bernstein 1994, and supported by Streiner (2003) suggested a minimum of 0.70. In all cases, the obtained alpha value in this study was about the same with the values recommended. Content validity was ascertained through the expert judgment. According to Thorn and Deitz 1989, the use of content experts is a practical approach to content validation. Three experts were asked to review the questionnaire for clarity, accuracy, and relevance of the content as it pertains to classroom assessment practices. These three persons are knowledgeable in the area of classroom assessment, educational psychology, and educational research. Regarding the comments provided, and the calculation of the percentage of agreement (83%) among the experts, was high. However, the experts used in this study suggested improving the sentence structure of a few items in sections one and three of the questionnaire.

3.7 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations, calculated to determine teachers' levels of agreement with factors and the items that loaded on each factors regarding their" thoughts about assessment

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined teachers' classroom assessment practices. Relationships between teachers' thoughts about classroom assessment, their perceived skill and frequency at which they used assessment practices were examined. Comparisons were made based on teacher characteristics (assessment training, standard/form taught, subject taught, and years of experience).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to reduce the number of items in the "Thoughts about assessment" subscale to four factors (Mastery, Performance, Grading Practices, and Assessment Training). Descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations and one sample t-tests were computed to ascertain teachers' levels of agreement with these factors. All the four factors were significantly different from each other (see Table 4.1). Descriptive statistics were also calculated for individual items within each factor to ascertain how teachers' agreed with each item. Teachers showed greatest agreement with items that conveyed mastery orientations. In particular, teachers' agreed with the statements that the purpose of assessment is to monitor pupilslearning progress (the highest rated item) and the purpose of assessment is to determine if pupilshave mastered learning objectives. Teachers were less likely to agree with items thatmeasured perceptions about the adequacy of their assessment training; this was emphasized by their agreement that they needed more training in assessment (the third highest rated item). The teachers did not support the statement that indicated that they learned assessment techniques that they do not use. The levels of agreement for the three purpose statements under Mastery Factor were significantly different from each other ($p < .05$). The items in order of agreement were stated that the purpose of assessment is to: (a) monitor students' learning progress, (b) determine if pupilshave mastered the learning objectives, and (c) determine the effectiveness of instruction. The

other two items had to do with feedback to the teacher in terms of tests providing information as to what student skills need attention, and that the pupilsconsider grades as feedback for improvement.

Four other items concerning the purpose of assessment loaded under the Performance Factor. In order of level of agreement they stated that the purpose of assessment is to: (a) prepare pupilsfor standardized examinations, (b) make pupilsaccountable for their learning, (c) motivate students, and (d) determine student grades. There were no "purpose of assessment" items under either the Testing Practices or Training factors. All of the Grading Practices items were significantly different from each other in degrees of agreement ($p < .05$). In general, teachers strongly agreed that "giving individualized comments for student learning is more important than giving grades," and agreed that "student effort should be considered when assigning student grades." Teachers gave mixed responses regarding the adequacy of the assessment training that they received, but agreed that they needed more training in student assessment, tests, and measurement (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Means and Standard Deviations for "Thoughts about Assessment" Factors and Items

Factors and items	*M*	*SD*	Difference
Mastery	**4.29**	**0.49**	**A**
2. Purpose of assess. is to	4.42	b 0.73	
determine if pupils mastered	4.18	0.86	
6. Purpose of assess. is to determinec effectiveness of teaching	4.20	0.82	
7. Tests help me focus on skills needed by students	4.49	c 0.67	
12. Purpose of assess. is to	4.16	0.84	
	3.76	**0.65**	

monitorpupilslearningprogress

a

16. pupilsto consider grades aseedback c f

Performance **B**

Pupilsgradespupilsfor stand exams reward for good work

Pupils accountable for their learning assigning student grades giving grades class was adequate

Note. Factors and items with similar indicators are not significantly different from each other ($p < .0$

In order to assess how each pair of the four "Thoughts about Assessment" factors were related, second-order partial correlations were conducted. Second-order partial correlations established the extent of the relationship between each pair of the four factors (Mastery, Performance, Grading Practices, and Assessment Training) when the effects of other two factors were held constant (Field, 2003). The results showed a moderate significant relationship between Mastery and Performance (r =.49), and a weak significant relationship between Mastery and Training (r = .09), and between Performance and Testing practices (r = 17) (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Second-Order Partial Correlations for Assessment Thoughts Subscale

	Mastery	Performance	Testing	Training
Mastery	-			
Performance	.49*	-		
Testing Practices	.06	.17*	-	
Training	.09*	.02	-.03	-

Note. $*p < .05$

Which areas of classroom assessment do teachers believe they are most skilled and how related are the skill factors?

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to reduce the number of items in the skill subscale to six factors (Criterion Referenced Testing, Grading Practices, Statistical Applications, Assessment Applications, Essay Items, and Objective Items). Descriptive statistics and-sample *t*-tests were calculated to assess teachers' levels of agreement with the factors and items regarding their perceived skill in assessment practice

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for Skill Factors

	Factors/items	M	SD	Difference
Criterion Reference testing		**3.65**	**0.80**	**A**
17	Assess specific course objectives	3.34	1.17	a
19	Test covers what taught	3.95	0.97	b
23	Develop marking keys	3.39	1.23	c
24	Fairly assign grades	3.87	0.97	d
25	Use results to evaluate improvement	3.63	1.06	e
26	Align items to objectives	3.70	1.06	e
28	Give comments along with grades	3.67	1.07	e
Grading practices		**2.73**	**0.92**	**B**
10	Using portfolio assessment	2.36	1.27	f
15	Incl. student improvement when grading	2.94	1.19	g
16	Incl. student effort in calculation of grades	2.79	1.18	h
18	Dev. system grading procedures	2.65	1.23	i
20	Using peer assessments	2.93	1.19	g
Statistics application		**2.88**	**0.88**	**C**
1.23 j	4 Explain standardized exam	2.91		
	5 Calculate central tendency	3.22		
1.30 k	6 Conduct item analysis	2.82		
	7 Revise test based on item analysis	3.19		
1.18 l	22 Use table of specification	2.46		
	29 Calculate variability	2.69		

1.14	m			
1.17	n			
1.28	o			
Assessment application		**3.26**	**0.88**	D
3	Higher cognitive items	3.30	1.12	p
8	Assess individual. students	3.51	1.06	q
9	Assess problem solving skills	3.04	1.16	r
11.	Use assessment results for decision making	3.04	1.14	r
12	Determine why student make mistakes	3.13	1.11	r
13	Use results to plan teaching	3.34	1.07	a
14	Communicating assessment results to	others 3.46	1.07	q
Essay items		**3.13**	**1.08**	E
2	Essay items	3.35	1.20	a
21	Fair grading of essay items	2.91	1.23	j
Objective items		**3.61**	**0.99**	A
1	Multiple choice items	3.58	1.08	s
27	Write true/false items	3.65	1.22	i

Note. Factors and items with similar indicators are not signif*ica*ntly different from each other.

Teachers reported to be more skilled in criterion referenced testing practices.

In particular, teachers reported to be skilled in ensuring that the test adequately covers materials taught, and in assessing specific course objectives. Teachers also reported to be skilled in constructing objective items. Teachers reported to have a fair amount of skill in constructing essay items and applying assessment results. Teachers reported to be less skilled in grading practices, and using statistical applications. Particularly they were less skilled in using a table of specification to plan tests, and calculating variability for teacher made tests.

Four of the seven items that loaded on criterion referenced testing factor were significantly different from each other ($p < .05$). These items asked teachers to indicate whether or not they have skills in: (a) making sure the test adequately covers the material taught in class, (b) fairly assigning grades to all students, (c) developing rubrics (marking keys) for objectively grading students' assignments, and (d) assessing specific course objectives. Three items that loaded under the grading practice asked teachers to indicate their perceived skills in: (a) using portfolio assessment, (b) including effort in the calculation of grades, and (c) developing systematic grading procedures, were significantly different from each other ($p < .05$). All items that loaded under use of statistical application were all significantly different from each other in degrees of

agreement ($p < .05$). The items in their order of agreement asked for teachers' perceptions about their skills in: (a) calculating central tendency for teacher-made tests, (b) revising tests based on item analysis, (c) explaining standardized exam scores to others, (d) conducting item analysis (item difficulty/discrimination) for teacher-made tests, (f) usinga table of specifications to plan assessments, and (g) calculating variability for teacher- made tests. Two items for assessment application were significantly different from each other in degrees of agreement ($p < .05$) and they asked teachers to indicate whether they were skilled in: (a) writing test items for higher cognitive levels, and (b) using assessment results when planning teaching. All items under construction of essay, and objective items were significantly different from each other in degrees of agreement ($p < .05$).

In order to assess how each pair of the six "*skill*" in classroom assessment practices factors were related, fourth- order partial correlations were computed between pairs of factors to establish the extent of their relationship when the effects of other factors were held constant (Field, 2005). Results showed that almost a number of factors for the skill in assessment practices were fairly correlated (see Table 4.4). The factors that showed very small correlations were skill in essay items with criterion reference testing ($r = .01$), essay items with statistics application ($r = .07$). Objective items had very small correlations with grading practices *(*$r = .02$), statistics application ($r = .07$), and assessment application ($r = .02$).

Table 4.4

Fourth-Order Partial Correlations for How Skilled in Assessment Practices Factors

	Criterion Ref. Test.	Grading Practices	Stats. Appl.	Assess Appl.	Essay Items	Obj. Items
Criterion Ref. Testing	-					
Grading Practices	.18*	-				
Statistics Application	.12*	.31*	-			
Assessment Application	.39*	.29*	.31*	-		
Essay Items	.01	.12*	.07	.19*	-	
Obj. Items	.18*	.02	.07	.02	.23*	-

Note. *$p < .05$

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This research examined assessment practices, skills and beliefs about assessment of primary school teachers in Ijebu Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State. Research questions relating to the study were formulated and the questionnaire leading to data collection was administered.

Also, previous literature on related concepts were reviewed the third chapter of the study dealt with the research design and methodology used for the collection of data and opinion from respondents and the system of analyzing the data for the research work. The fourth chapter consists of the presentation of the data collected, the analysis of data, the data was also interpreted in this same chapter.

5.2 Conclusion

As a result of this study it can be concluded that both trained and untrained teachers believe that alternative, student-centered assessment are effective. They believe in the concept of assessment for learning and assessment as learning. However, some teachers particularly trained teachers are reluctant in using some student-centered strategies.

Reluctance among trained teachers opens up an issue, “whether or not the teacher training has a significant impact on teachers in Ijebu Ode Local Government.” It can also be concluded that because teachers in Ijebu Ode are pressurized by the system of formal assessment (in the form of tests and examinations), they tend to complete the prescribed syllabus and overlook the assessment of the students’ knowledge and skills.

The teachers spend more time on over-emphasizing some parts of the syllabi hence claim they do not get time to use student-centered strategies of assessment which usually require more time for preparation and administration.

5.3 Recommendations

On the basis of the results of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. It is suggested that teachers ensure that they have acquired mastery over the alternative, student-centered assessment strategies and use these strategies for the holistic development of students rather than focusing on their ability of rote memorization.
2. The school management needs to provide opportunities for their teachers to take part in various professional development workshops, seminars and in-service programmes. These programmes should particularly focus on helping teachers to realize the importance of using student-centered assessment strategies as well as encouraging them to develop skills required for using student-centered classroom assessments.
3. Principals themselves should be well aware of the advancement in the field of classroom assessment and have a skill to motivate the staff to use the student-centered assessment strategies.

REFERENCES

Alkharusi, H. (2008). Effects of classroom assessment practices on students' achievement goals. Educational Assessment 13(4), 243–266,

Behar-Horenstein, L. S., & Seabert, D. M. (2002). Looking at classroom teaching: A missing component in studies of school performance. Curriculum and Teaching. 17 (1), 21-38.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2003). The development of formative assessment. In B. Davis & J. West-Burnham (Eds.), *International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Management* (pp. 409-18). London: Pearson. Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., & Wiliam, D. (2003). *Assessment for learning: Putting it into practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bliem, C. L., & Davinroy, K. H. (1997). *Teachers' beliefs about assessment and instruction in literacy*. *CSE technical report 421*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California.

Bloom, P. J. (n.d.). Looking inside: Helping teachers assess their beliefs and values. Retrieved May 19, 2012 from http://www.nhaeyc.org/ adminconference/documents/johannabminersa09am- teacherattitude.pdf.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Borko, H., Mayfield, V., Marion, S., Flexer, R., & Cumbo, K. (1997). Teachers' developing ideas and practices about mathematics performance assessment: Successes, stumbling blocks, and implications for professional development. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, *13*, 259-278.

Breen, M., Hird, B., Milton, M., Oliver, R., & Thwaite, A. (2001). What is the relationship between ESL teachers' pedagogic principles and their classroom practices? *Applied Linguistics*, *22*(4), 502-530.

Broadfoot, P. (2005). Dark alleys and blind bends: Testing the language of learning. *Language Testing*, *22*(2), 123-141.

Brown, G., T. L. (2002). Teachers' conceptions of assessment (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Campbell and Evans D. (2000). Assessment and classroom learning. *Educational Assessment: Principles, Policy and Practice, 5*(1), 7-74.

Cole, P. G., & Chan, L. K. S. (1987). Teaching principles and practice. Sydney: Prentice Hall.

McMillian, A. (2008). Identification and development of teachers' professional craft knowledge. In W. K. Ho, & R. Wong (Eds.), *Improving the quality of the teaching profession: An international perspective* (pp. 295-305). Singapore: Institute of Education.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Classroom Assessment Practices and Skills (CAPS)

Section A: Background Data

Instructions: The items listed below are designed to obtain information on your profile. Please read the items carefully then tick (√) and/or write the appropriate response for items 1 to 7.

1. What is your gender? Male ☐ Female ☐

2. What is your age range?

30 and under ☐

31 – 35 ☐

36 - 40 ☐

41 – 45 ☐

☐

46 and over

3. What educational qualifications do you have?

Certificate

Diploma

Bachelor Degree

Master's Degree

Other ☐ please specify_____

4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

5 years & under

6 - 10 years

11 - 15 years

16 years & Over

5. What subject do you teach? (Please state)

_____

6) What grade/level of students do you teach? (Please state)

Section B:

Assessment Methods Instructions: The items listed below are designed to obtain information on types of assessment methods, as well as types of test items you use. Please read the items carefully then tick (√) the appropriate response.

Part A: Test/Assessment Methods	Part B: Types of Test Items
Please tick the type of test/assessment you mostly use	Please tick the type of test item you mostly use with your students.

with your students.

1. Open book test
2. . Close book test
3. . Cooperative testing
4. Take home test
5. . Portfolio assessment
6. . Peer assessment
7. Self-assessment
8. . Collaborative or negotiated test

1. Multiple-choice items
2. True/false items
3. . Matching items
4. . Interpretive exercise
5. Fill-in-the-blanks
6. Short answer items
7. Restricted essay
8. Extended essay

Section C: Assessment Practices

Instructions: The items listed below are designed to obtain information on your assessment practices. Please read the items carefully then rate by circling orticking the appropriate response beside each items.

Classroom Assessment Skills

Directions: For each statement below use the following key to indicate your skill level for the following assessment tasks. Please check '√' in the appropriate box.

NA=Not Applicable , AN=Almost Never, S=Sometimes,OF= Often, AA=Almost Always

		NA	AN	S	OF	AA
1	**I consider the purpose of the assessment**					
2	. I ensure that the instructional objectives are clearly stated					
3	I use a table of specifications for preparing my assessment					
4	I review the guidelines of writing test items when preparing my assessments					
5	I include a variety of items/tasks in my assessments					
6	I ensure that each item matches the instructional objectives stated					
7	I arrange item types under different sections of my test/exam paper					
8	. I write specific instructions for the different sections of the test/exam paper					
9	I have a balance of easy, moderate and difficult items in my test/exam papers					
10	. I ensure the security of the assessments					
11	Before the assessment, I inform my students the purpose of the assessment and what the results will be used for					

12	. I inform my students about the areas that will be assessed					
13	. I inform my students about when the assessment will be administered					
14	I use a venue that will not impact of students' performance					
15	. I motivate the students to do their best before the assessment					
16	I give students tips on assessment-taking skills					
17	. I ensure that each student gets a paper to use on the day of the assessment					
18	I ensure that students understand the instructions for the assessment					
19	I monitor students for cheating during the assessment					
20	I am consistent follow the scoring key/guide when grading					
21	I grade assessmentusing a scoring guide					
22	. I ask my colleague to check the answers before I start grading to reduce scoring bias					
23	I make sure that my scoring is fair					
24	. I match students' performance on each item against each instructional objective/standards					
25	I communicate the assessment results to students					

	in a timely manner					
26	. I report students' grades in ways that they can easily understand it					
27	. I explain to the students how their scores were derived					
28	. I go through the graded assessments with the students					
29	. I allow students to ask questions about their graded papers					
30	I make changes to scoring applicable to all students that were assessed by me					
31	I give students the opportunity to appeal their grades					
32	I use item analysis to improve the quality of the test/exam items					
33	I analyze students' results using descriptive statistics					
34	I use the results of the statistical analysis to improve my teaching and assessment practices					

Please write comments about your assessment practices that were not covered in sections Band C above._____-_____.