

AN ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATORS KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS LEVELS IN ACHIEVING FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIAL STUDIES EVALUATION IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OSUN STATE.

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Abstract: *This study examines educators' knowledge and awareness of fair and inclusive assessment practices in junior secondary Social Studies classrooms in Osun State, Nigeria. The objectives were to assess teachers' understanding of fair assessment, explore their awareness of inclusive strategies, and identify the challenges they face in implementing these practices. A descriptive survey design was employed, with a sample of 300 Social Studies educators selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including t-test. The results indicate that 65% of respondents agreed with the adoption of fair assessment practices, while 35% disagreed, reflecting a mixed level of implementation. A significant relationship between teachers' knowledge of fair assessment and the adoption of inclusive strategies was found. Key challenges identified include inadequate teacher preparedness (35%), lack of resources (23%), and insufficient teaching qualifications (31%). The study concludes that while progress is being made, substantial gaps remain in the effective implementation of inclusive and fair assessment practices. Recommendations include enhancing teacher training, improving resource provision, and revising curriculum standards to ensure equitable assessment in Social Studies education.*

Introduction

Assessment is an integral part of the educational process, serving as a tool to evaluate students' learning outcomes, guide instructional practices,

and ensure accountability in education (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2020). In Social Studies education, assessment goes beyond academic measurement—it fosters civic competence,

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critical thinking, and responsible citizenship among learners (Adekunle & Olatunji, 2021). However, for assessment to serve its transformative function, it must be conducted in a manner that is fair and inclusive. Fair assessment refers to the use of evaluation techniques that are valid, reliable, transparent, and free from bias. It demands that educators maintain objectivity, apply consistent standards, and employ a variety of assessment tools that cater to different learning styles and abilities. Fair assessment ensures that evaluation procedures are unbiased, transparent, and consistent, while inclusive assessment accounts for the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of all learners (UNESCO, 2021; Ekundayo & Oyebanji, 2022). Together, these principles promote a more just and supportive learning environment, where every learner's potential can be accurately recognized and nurtured.

In the Nigerian context, classrooms especially in junior secondary schools are characterized by a high level of diversity, including differences in language, ability, socio-economic status, and learning preferences (Olatunde & Salawu, 2023). This diversity requires Social Studies educators to employ assessment strategies that do not disadvantage any group of students. Inclusive assessment practices promote equity by accommodating students with special needs, learners from marginalized communities, and those with varying academic abilities (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2019; Yusuf & Ajayi, 2021). Unfortunately, the implementation of such

practices is still limited in many Nigerian schools due to systemic challenges and gaps in teachers' professional knowledge.

Research indicates that many educators lack the necessary understanding and skills to design and implement fair and inclusive assessments (Achor & Ada, 2020). Inadequate pre-service and in-service training, limited exposure to differentiated assessment models, and a continued reliance on high-stakes examinations have all contributed to this knowledge gap (Ogundele & Olatoye, 2022; Harris & Brown, 2020). Consequently, students who do not conform to conventional assessment expectations are often misjudged or underserved. Furthermore, structural challenges such as large class sizes, limited access to instructional resources, and insufficient professional development opportunities further complicate efforts to evaluate students fairly and inclusively. In Osun State, where this study is situated, Social Studies remains a core subject at the junior secondary level, intended to instill national consciousness and civic values. However, the extent to which Social Studies teachers in the state apply fair and inclusive assessment practices remains underexplored. The lack of empirical data on educators' knowledge and awareness levels in this regard raises concern about the effectiveness and equity of the current evaluation system.

Therefore, this study seeks to assess Social Studies educators' knowledge and awareness of fair and inclusive assessment practices in junior secondary schools in Osun State. It also aims to

identify the challenges they encounter in implementing these practices, with a view to informing policy, teacher education, and classroom strategies that support equitable learning outcomes for all students.

Statement of the Problem

Assessment is central to the teaching and learning process, especially in Social Studies, where it supports both academic evaluation and the development of civic values. However, in many junior secondary schools in Osun State, there is growing concern that assessment practices do not adequately reflect the principles of fairness and inclusivity. Many educators continue to rely on traditional methods that may not cater to the diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences of learners. The ability of educators to implement fair and inclusive assessment largely depends on their knowledge and awareness of appropriate strategies. Yet, there appears to be limited empirical evidence on the extent to which Social Studies teachers possess these competencies. In addition, several contextual challenges such as large class sizes, lack of training, and insufficient resources may hinder effective implementation of equitable assessment practices.

It is on this premise, this study investigates educators' knowledge and awareness of fair and inclusive assessment in junior secondary Social Studies classrooms in Osun State, and to identify the challenges they face in this regard.

Objectives of the Study

The main trust of this study is to assess educators' knowledge and awareness levels in

achieving fair and inclusive Social Studies evaluation in junior secondary schools in Osun State.

Specifically, the study objectives are to:

- (i) investigate educators' knowledge of fair assessment practices within the context of Social Studies education;
- (ii) examine educators' awareness of inclusive assessment strategies that accommodate students' diverse backgrounds and experiences;
- (iii) identify the challenges faced by educators in implementing fair and inclusive assessment practices in junior secondary Social Studies classrooms.

Research Question

What are the challenges faced by educators in implementing fair and inclusive assessment practices in junior secondary Social Studies classrooms?

Hypotheses

1. H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between educators' knowledge of fair assessment practices and their implementation of fair evaluation in junior secondary Social Studies classrooms.
2. H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between educators' awareness of inclusive assessment strategies and their ability to accommodate diverse student backgrounds in assessment.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. This design is suitable for obtaining factual information from respondents and for describing the existing conditions, attitudes, and

perceptions of Social Studies educators regarding fair and inclusive assessment practices. The population of the study comprises all Social Studies educators teaching in junior secondary public schools across the three educational districts of Osun State. A sample of Social Studies educators were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. First, a stratified sampling method was used to group schools based on educational zones. Then, from each stratum, simple random sampling was used to select schools and educators. A sample size of 300 Social Studies educators were drawn to ensure adequate representation. The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Fair and Inclusive Assessment Practices Questionnaire (FIAPQ). The questionnaire consists of four sections: Section A of the instrument deals with demographic data of respondents (e.g., gender, teaching experience, qualification, school type). Section B measures educators' knowledge of fair assessment practices. Section C items assess educators' awareness of inclusive assessment strategies while section D items identify challenges faced in implementing fair and inclusive assessments. The instrument employs a 4-point Likert scale format (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). The questionnaire was

subjected to face and content validity by experts in Social Studies education and educational measurement. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted with 30 Social Studies educators in a neighboring state, and the data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a reliability coefficient of 0.70. The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, personally administered the questionnaires to the selected educators in their respective schools to ensure a high return rate. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) were used to summarize the demographic data and responses. Inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion**Table 1****Frequency and Proportion of Challenges Faced by Educators**

Challenge	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Teachers' Preparedness	105	35.0
Inadequate Resources	69	23.0
Both Preparedness & Resources	24	8.0
Teaching Qualification	93	31.0
No Major Challenge	9	3.0
Total	300	100.0

The data shows that the most prominent challenge identified by educators is teachers' preparedness (35%), followed closely by issues related to teaching qualifications (31%). A smaller proportion reported inadequate resources (23%), while 8% cited both preparedness and resources as challenges. Only 3% of respondents reported no major challenge.

Table 2: Correlation between Educators' Knowledge and Implementation of Fair Assessment Practices

Variable	M	SD	r	t	df	p
Knowledge of Fair Assessment Practices	3.60	0.80				
Implementation of Fair Assessment Practices	3.45	0.75	.30	5.45	298	<.001

Note: M= Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; r = Pearson Correlation Coefficient; t= t-test statistic; df = degrees of Freedom; p = Significance

Table 3; Pearson Correlation and t-test between Awareness and Ability to Accommodate Diversity

Variables	M	SD	r	T	df	P	t-cal
Awareness of Inclusive Assessment Strategies	3.25	0.76					
Ability to Accommodate Diversity	3.12	0.81	.28	5.03	298	0.00	+.967

There was a significant positive correlation between the two variables, $r(298)=.28$, $p<.001$, with a corresponding $t(298)=5.03$

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the research question, showed that the challenges faced by educators in implementing fair and inclusive assessment practices revealed that teacher preparedness (35%) and teaching qualifications (31%) were the two most frequently cited issues among the 300 respondents. These findings suggest that many Social Studies educators may lack adequate professional training or may not be fully equipped with contemporary assessment strategies that align with inclusive educational goals.

The prominence of teacher preparedness as a major concern supports the assertion by Ogunyemi and Adebisi (2022) that many Social Studies teachers in Nigerian secondary schools are not sufficiently trained in modern assessment methods, especially those that address students' diverse backgrounds and needs. Without proper preparedness, even well-intentioned teachers may struggle to apply fair and inclusive evaluation techniques effectively. Similarly, the fact that 31% of respondents identified teaching qualifications as a challenge aligns with Adegbile and Kolawole (2023), who observed that many educators teaching Social Studies in junior secondary schools do not have a strong and requisite pedagogical foundation or specialized training in the subject. This undermines their ability to deliver content appropriately and assess student performance using equitable standards.

Inadequate resources (23%) and a combined concern for both preparedness and resources (8%) also highlight systemic issues affecting assessment delivery. These findings corroborate the study by Ajibade and Alade (2021), which noted that the lack of access to assessment tools, digital infrastructure, and reference materials continues to hinder teachers from practicing inclusive and fair assessment. When essential resources are lacking, it becomes difficult to diversify assessment methods to cater to students with different learning needs and experiences.

Interestingly, only 3% of the respondents indicated that there were no major challenges. This reflects a general consensus that the current system still poses significant obstacles to achieving inclusive and fair assessment practices. Overall, the data underscores the need for ongoing professional development, curriculum restructuring, and enhanced support systems to improve assessment practices in Nigerian schools. Addressing both human and material challenges is essential for achieving the goals of equity and fairness in Social Studies education (UNESCO, 2021).

The result of the test for hypothesis one showed a statistically significant positive relationship between educators' knowledge of fair assessment practices and their implementation of fair assessment strategies in junior secondary school Social Studies classrooms in Osun State ($r(298) = .30$, $p < .001$). This finding implies that

as educators' knowledge of fair assessment practices increases, so does their tendency to apply these practices effectively in classroom. This outcome aligns with the position of Adegoke and Ogunlade (2023), who observed that teachers with a sound understanding of assessment principles are more likely to use transparent, objective, and inclusive approaches in evaluating student performance. In their study across selected Nigerian secondary schools, they reported that knowledge directly influences practice, especially when it is supported by training and resources.

Furthermore, Brookhart (2022) emphasizes that fair assessment begins with a deep understanding of its principles including validity, reliability, equity, and clarity. When educators are knowledgeable in these areas, they are more capable of creating assessments that accurately reflect students' learning, avoid bias, and offer multiple pathways for students to demonstrate their competencies. From a broader perspective, Stiggins and Chappuis (2021) argued that teachers' conceptual knowledge of assessment not only enhances fairness but also improves student motivation and engagement. Fair assessments promote a sense of justice and trust, leading to better learning outcomes, especially in subjects like Social Studies, which are closely tied to critical thinking, participation, and civic responsibility.

Ogunyemi and Adebisi (2022) found that Social Studies teachers in public secondary schools who received in-service training on assessment literacy were more likely to practice unbiased

and student-centered evaluation. Their research highlights a key implication: knowledge must be supported by continuous professional development to maintain fair practices consistently across contexts.

Despite the moderate strength of the correlation ($r = .30$), the significance of the relationship suggests that knowledge is an essential though not sole factor. Other elements such as institutional support, workload, and assessment policy frameworks may also play a significant role in shaping how fairly teachers assess students (Adetona & Folarin, 2023).

The finding from hypothesis two revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between educators' awareness of inclusive assessment strategies and their ability to accommodate diverse student backgrounds in junior secondary school Social Studies classrooms in Osun State. This finding suggests that as teachers become more aware of inclusive assessment approaches, they are better equipped to recognize and respond to the varied cultural, linguistic, and learning needs of their students. This finding aligns with the argument of Adewale and Ogundele (2023), who emphasized that inclusive assessment awareness equips educators with the tools to fairly evaluate students from marginalized and minority backgrounds, ensuring that assessments reflect actual learning rather than systemic bias. According to Uleanya and Gamede (2022), when educators understand the principles of inclusivity in assessment such as differentiated tasks, flexibility in modes of response, and

culturally responsive assessment they are more likely to support learners with varied capabilities and experiences.

Florian and Black-Hawkins (2021) have asserted that awareness of inclusive practices among teachers is a precursor to successful inclusive education. They argued that assessment remains one of the most powerful tools for inclusion or exclusion in educational systems, and thus, improving awareness directly enhances classroom fairness and equity. Similarly, Brookhart (2022) emphasized that inclusive assessment awareness enables teachers to design assessments that go beyond traditional tests to incorporate performance-based, portfolio, and student-centered tasks, which are particularly effective in diverse classrooms.

The findings also affirm Tomlinson's (2020) theory of differentiated instruction, which posits that educators must be both knowledgeable and responsive to individual differences in order to foster equitable learning environments. In the Nigerian context, Okebukola and Akinola (2021) found that when Social Studies teachers adopted inclusive assessment techniques, student participation and achievement improved significantly, especially among students from underrepresented groups.

However, the result of this study also implies a call for action. While a moderate correlation was observed, the relationship ($r = .28$) suggests that awareness alone may not be sufficient; practical capacity, institutional support, and continuous professional development are needed to deepen inclusive assessment practices (Adetona &

Ogunyemi, 2024). Teacher training institutions, therefore, must prioritize inclusive pedagogy and assessment as core competencies during pre-service and in-service programmes.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown that educators' knowledge and awareness significantly influence the adoption of fair and inclusive assessment practices in junior secondary Social Studies classrooms in Osun State. The statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship between teachers' understanding of fair assessment principles and their implementation in practice, suggesting that assessment literacy is crucial to achieving equity and inclusiveness in education.

Furthermore, the study identified major challenges such as inadequate teacher preparedness, insufficient teaching qualifications, and lack of resources as significant barriers to the effective implementation of inclusive assessment strategies. These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted professional development, enhanced pre-service teacher training, and institutional support to equip educators with the necessary skills and tools for fair assessment practices.

In sum, promoting fairness and inclusivity in Social Studies evaluation requires a multifaceted approach that strengthens teacher capacity, addresses systemic constraints, and fosters a culture of equity in assessment. Without these efforts, the goal of achieving just and inclusive

education as envisioned in national and global education policies may remain elusive.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to address the gaps identified in achieving fair and inclusive assessment practices in junior secondary Social Studies classrooms.

Firstly, it is essential for education authorities and relevant stakeholders to prioritize the professional development of Social Studies educators. Regular capacity-building workshops, seminars, and training programs should be organized to enhance teachers' understanding and practical application of fair and inclusive assessment strategies. These training efforts should particularly focus on promoting objectivity, accommodating learner diversity, and eliminating biases in assessment. In addition, teacher education institutions should revise and strengthen their pre-service training curricula to include comprehensive courses on assessment literacy. This will ensure that prospective teachers acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to implement equitable assessment practices from the onset of their careers.

Furthermore, the provision of adequate instructional materials and assessment resources must be addressed. Government and school management should invest in the supply of diverse tools and technologies that support inclusive practices, enabling teachers to cater to students with different learning styles,

backgrounds, and needs. There is also a need for school leaders and instructional supervisors to offer continuous guidance and monitoring. Through provision of professional support and overseeing classroom practices, Social Studies teachers at the junior secondary level can help ensure that fair and inclusive assessment approaches are consistently implemented.

Also, encouraging collaboration and peer learning among teachers is another critical step. Platforms should be created within schools for teachers to share best practices, mentor one another, and collectively solve assessment-related challenges. This peer-driven approach can foster innovation and reinforce commitment to inclusive practices. Lastly, policymakers should develop and enforce clear guidelines that support equitable assessment in secondary education, particularly in Social Studies. These policies should be backed by regular needs assessments to evaluate teachers' challenges and progress, and to provide data-driven interventions that respond to specific classroom realities.

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