

# GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION AS DETERMINANTS OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the attitude of teachers in secondary school towards assessment for learning in Rivers State as determined by certain demographic characteristics such as educational qualification and gender. The study was guided by two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses. The study used the ex-post facto research design, with a sample of 498 teachers drawn through a multistage sampling technique from all the teachers in Rivers State. The researcher-designed instrument was used for data collection which was adequately assessed for validity and reliability, the reliability yielded a coefficient of 0.721 using split half. The data for the study were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions, while independent sample t-test and ANOVA were used for testing the hypotheses where necessary. The result of the study showed that educational qualification significantly determines their attitude towards assessment for learning. Conversely, the study showed that gender did not significantly determine their attitude towards assessment for learning. On the basis of the result, it was recommended that in-service training be provided for all teachers so that they can appreciate and implement assessment for learning in their classroom instruction.

**Keywords:** Educational Qualification, Assessment for Learning, Attitude, Gender

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The educational system of most countries globally is hinged on the ability of teachers to implement learning systems in the classroom environment that contributes to broad-based societal development. To this end, Orluwene and Etim (2015:10) asseverated that "the primary professional responsibility of the teacher involves, desirable behaviour changes in the learner through planned intervention." As is often the case teachers, in collaboration with other educational stakeholders such as curriculum planners, examination bodies, international donor organizations and civil society organizations, break down the broad educational aims into smaller classroom instructional objectives. It is, therefore, necessary to determine on a periodic basis how far these objectives have been achieved. The process through which this is done is assessment.

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Confirming the centrality of assessment in the educational enterprise and the critical role teachers play, Elliot, Kratochwill Cook and Travers in Orluwene (2015) opined that "assessing students' knowledge and skills is a central issue in schools. Effective teaching and learning cannot be said to have taken place without appropriate assessment because it provides evidence for the success or failure of instruction and direction of students' attainment.

Based on the extant literature, there are three forms of assessment: assessment *of* learning (AOL), assessment *as* learning (AAL), assessment *for* learning (AFL) (Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education, [WNCPE] 2006). Assessment *of* Learning has dominated much of formal education history. In this context, assessment was used as a mechanism for providing an indicator of learning after teaching where students are tested and judgements are made and the next unit of instruction are executed. This is also called summative assessment. It is designed to provide evidence of achievement to parents, other educators, students themselves and outside group such as employers, higher educational institutions. It is used to confirm what students know and are proficient at, in order to demonstrate whether they have achieved the curriculum outcomes, and sometimes to show their relative performance in comparison to their peers. This form of assessment often becomes public and results in statements or symbols about how well students are learning which is used for making crucial decisions about students' futures.

Assessment *as* learning focusses on students and views assessment as a process of metacognition (knowledge of one's own thought processes) for students. Assessment *as* learning originates from the idea that learning involves more than transferring ideas from a more knowledgeable to a less knowledgeable individual, but is an active and interactive process of cognitive restructuring that occurs when individuals encounter new ideas. From this perspective, students are the central hub between assessment and learning. For students to be actively engaged in creating their own understanding, they must learn to be critical assessors who make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and use it for new learning. This is the regulatory process in metacognition; that is, students, become adept at personally monitoring what they are learning, and use what they discover from the monitoring to make adjustments, adaptations, and even major changes in their thinking and approach to learning situations. This type of assessment occurs mostly on an informal basis such as peer feedback self-assessment.

The last form of assessment which is the concern of the present study is assessment *for* learning. Assessment *for* learning is the most current direction in the assessment framework. It occurs throughout the learning process and is designed to make each students understanding visible so that teachers can decide what to do to help each student progress academically. As something that occurs throughout the learning process, it is formative in nature (Brown, 2008). Teachers adopting the assessment *for* learning approach see assessment as an investigative tool to find out as much as they can about what their students know and can do and what confusions, misconceptions or gaps they might have. This information is used as the basis for determining what teachers need to do next to improve students' learning including but not limited to providing descriptive feedback for students, deciding on grouping for classroom activities, instructional strategies and sharing of learning resources (Amakiri & Orluwene, 2016; WNCPE, 2006).

Consequently, the role of teachers in the assessment process cannot be overemphasized be it in assessment *of*, *as* or *for* learning. Therefore as posited by Willits, Elliot, Daly, Gresham and Kramer (1998) effective teaching boils down to good instruction, good assessment and using each other to improve the other. With specific reference to assessment types within the context of Nigeria, assessment of learning is often conducted by national, state or local testing bodies or organizations; assessment as learning is done informally by students, while assessment for learning relies on the classroom teacher because teachers are saddled with the responsibility of conducting continuous or formative assessment for their students.

Teachers' role in assessment *for* learning has been a subject of much scholarly research and public opinion, which have therefore resulted in a plethora of literature on what they need to do and what is expected of them. As presented by WNCPE (2006) teachers' role in AFL includes: aligning instruction with targeted outcomes, identifying particular needs of students or groups, selecting and adapting materials and resources, creating differentiated teaching strategies and learning opportunities for assisting individual students move forward in their learning, and providing immediate feedback and direction to students. Teachers also use assessment for learning to enhance students' motivation and commitment to learning. When teachers are committed to improving learning as the focus of assessment, they change the classroom

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culture to one where students' success is the basic priority of all classroom activity. They make visible what students believe to be true, and use that information to help students move forward in manageable, efficient, and respectful ways.

Stating that the success or failure of any assessment programme, especially assessment *for* learning is dependent on teachers is just stating the obvious. This is because teachers are indispensable to both teaching and assessing of students within the classroom setting. However, various factors could influence teachers' assessment practices as has been investigated by Orluwene (2016) such as gender and educational qualification. One factor that was not considered was teachers' attitude. As such teachers' attitude towards AFL needs to be investigated.

The concept of attitude has been extensively investigated in the psychoeducational literature. The interest in the concept is not surprising because according to Williams and Iruloh (2014) if the attitude of a person towards a given object is known, it can be used in addition to other situational variables to explain and predict the actions and reactions of the individual specific circumstances. As defined by Kpolovie, Joe and Okoto (2014) attitude in a general sense refers to the intensity and direction of a person's inclinations, feelings, prejudices, bias, conceived notions, ideas, fears and convictions about objects, events, people or things. It is common for humans to exhibit either a favourable or unfavourable attitude towards things or ideas. Teachers, not being an exception, might be positively or negatively disposed towards various teaching variables including assessment.

Specifically, teachers have been shown to display diverse competencies as regards to various assessment practice (Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003). It then follows that if teachers have different levels of competencies in various assessment practices, then their attitude towards various types of assessment would not be uniform. It is therefore against this background that the present study is being conducted to investigate on teachers' characteristics that may be possible determinants of their attitude towards assessment *for* learning in Rivers State. Teachers in secondary schools vary in their characteristics in such areas as educational qualification, personality, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, school type (public or private) and location. For the purpose of this study, the teachers' characteristics that will be considered are educational qualification and gender.

As used in the present study, educational qualification refers to the highest educational attainment an individual teacher has attained such as bachelors, masters or doctorate. In the Nigerian context, the minimum required qualification for an individual to attain to be qualified for teaching is the National Certificate in Education, which is obtained after graduation from a College of Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012). However, it is not uncommon to find individuals who are teachers in Nigeria with a secondary school certificate. However, in this study, only those teachers who possess a minimum of NCE will be used for this study.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Nigerian society is undergoing a radical paradigm shift in all facet of living: economical, political, social and educational. As these changes continue, educational stakeholders are confronted with the task of creating schools that will serve the emerging needs of students and prepare them for a future, even though they are not too certain of the nature of the future students will face. This has called for a rethinking and re-evaluation of school practices including assessment. In the past, education was seen as just possessing basic skills and knowledge required by only a few but current trend shows that students come to the classroom with a diverse skill set and learn at a different pace. Unless a teacher takes into cognizance these differences and unique learning pattern of students into consideration which is most possible by adopting the assessment *for* learning culture, he/she may not be able to help students grow positively. This could result in some students finding school boring and uninteresting. Furthermore, this could further exacerbate the current rate of dropout experienced in the Nigerian society today.

There has been a shift in assessment practices from AOL to AFL, which may have introduced some level of adjustment among teachers. In another dimension, experience revealed that most teachers that their responsibilities is just that of teaching students and not to assess them. Sequel to that they feel that assessment, in general, is an added task. AOL is summative in nature while AFL is formative needed as a corrective measure, hence it is taken at a regular and continuous basis. The researcher is feeling that this shift may be favourable or unfavourable to some teachers. On this note, the problem of the study is what attitude the teachers' exhibit towards AFL based on their different characteristics.

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### 3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate how teachers' characteristics determine their attitude towards assessment *for* learning in Rivers State. In specific terms, the objectives of this study include:

1. To investigate the extent to which educational qualification determine teachers' attitude towards assessment *for* learning.
2. To ascertain the extent to which teachers' gender determine teachers' attitude towards assessment *for* learning.

### 4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were developed to guide this study:

Research Question 1: To what extent does educational qualification determine teachers' attitude towards assessment *for* learning?

Research Question 2: To what extent do years of gender determines teachers' attitude towards assessment *for* learning?

### 5. HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested to guide this study at 0.05 level of significance:

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards assessment *for* learning on the basis of their educational qualification.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards assessment *for* learning on the basis of their gender.

### 6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The design adopted for this study is the ex post facto research design. A sample of 498 teachers drawn from the population of 4413 male and 4039 female teachers in Rivers State, Nigeria was used for the study. The multi-stage sampling technique was used by involving cluster, non-proportionate stratified and convenient sampling technique. Cluster sampling was used in dividing the state into 3 senatorial zones, thereafter two local governments (LGAs) from each senatorial zone were randomly drawn from the total number of LGA's by applying non-proportionate stratified sampling. Non-proportionate stratified sampling technique was used because the senatorial zones do not have an equal number of LGAs. The researcher drew the proportion of male and female teachers in each of the selected LGA's gotten from cluster sampling. Finally, convenience sampling technique was used to administer the instruments on any available teacher who meets the criteria of the present study.

**Instrument for Data Collection:** A The instrument that was used for the collection of data in the present study is tagged/titled Teachers' Attitude towards Assessment for Learning Scale (TATAFLS). The instrument is divided into two major sections. The first section contains spaces for respondents to indicate their demographic characteristics such as educational qualification, years of experience, gender, teaching subject area, professional qualification. Section B of the instrument is a 20-item questionnaire constructed in a four Likert scale of Strongly Agreed SA, Agreed A, Disagreed D and Strongly Disagreed SD. The instrument is composed of 12 positively keyed items and eight negatively keyed items. The validity of the instrument was done by experts in Educational Psychology, University of Port Harcourt. Reliability of the instrument using the split-half method yielded a coefficient of 0.721. The direct delivery method was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses.

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of educational qualification on teachers' attitude towards assessment for learning**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
NCE	73	51.37	4.87
BACHELOR	361	63.49	5.30
MASTERS	52	67.94	4.11
DOCTORATE	12	69.43	6.52
Total	498	62.32	7.04

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From table 1, it can be observed that teachers' attitude towards assessment for learning increases on the basis of their educational qualification. From the result presented in the said table, teachers who reported their highest educational qualification to be National Certificate in Education (NCE) had a mean value of 51.37 (SD = 4.87), with those who reported a Bachelor's degree as their highest educational qualification yielding a mean value of 63.49 (SD = 5.30). For those who stated their highest educational qualification as Masters degree, their mean value was 67.94 (SD = 4.11), while teachers with doctoral educational qualification, their attitude towards assessment for learning yielded a mean value of 69.43 (SD = 7.04). From the mean value reported, it can be seen that those with doctoral qualification had the highest mean value (best) attitude towards assessment for learning, while those with NCE qualification had the least attitude. To ascertain if a significant difference exists between teachers educational qualification and their attitude towards assessment for learning, a one-way ANOVA was conducted which is shown in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Summary of one-way ANOVA on the influence of educational qualification on teachers' attitude towards assessment for learning**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11497.786	3	3832.595	143.951	.000
Within Groups	13152.384	494	26.624		
Total	24650.170	497			

Analysis, as shown in Table 2, revealed that after testing for a statistical difference in the attitude of teachers towards assessment for learning (AFL) based on their educational qualification, F-value of 143.951 was obtained at 3 and 494 degrees of freedom with an associated p-value of 0.0005 which was lesser than the chosen alpha of 0.05. Since the p-value obtained was lesser than the chosen alpha for the study, it can be concluded that educational qualification is a significant determinant of teachers' attitude towards assessment for learning. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Nevertheless, since educational qualification was a significant determinant of teachers' attitude towards assessment for learning, there is a need to determine the direction of the influence. This was done by subjecting the mean difference to Post Hoc multiple comparisons via Least Square Difference (LSD). The result obtained is presented in Table 3

**Table 3: Post Hoc multiple comparison test using LSD on the influence of educational qualification on attitude towards AFL**

Compared groups	Absolute mean diff	P-value
NCE and Bachelor	12.12	0.000
NCE and Masters	16.56	0.000
NCE and Doctorate	18.06	0.000
Bachelor and Masters	4.45	0.000
Bachelor and Doctorate	5.94	0.000
Masters and Doctorate	1.48	0.369

A look at table 3 above show that a significant difference exist in the attitude of teachers with NCE and Bachelor (mean difference = 12.12, p = 0.000<0.05), between teachers with NCE and Masters (mean difference = 16.56, p = 0.000<0.05), between teachers with NCE and Doctorate (mean difference = 18.06, p = 0.000<0.05), between teachers with Bachelor and Masters (mean difference = 4.45, p = 0.000<0.05), between teachers with Bachelor and Doctorate (mean difference = 5.94, p = 0.000<0.05). However, the result did not reveal any significant difference between the attitude of teachers with Masters' and Doctorate (mean difference = 1.48, p = 0.369>0.05).

**Table 4: Mean, Standard deviation and independent sample t-test of teachers' attitude towards AFL based on gender**

Gender	n	Mean	SD	Df	t	p	Decision
Male	248	62.12	7.07	496	0.631	0.529	Retain HO <sub>2</sub>
Female	250	62.52	7.04				p>0.05

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From the result analysed as shown in table 4, it can be seen that male teachers reported a mean value of 62.12 (SD = 7.07), while female teachers reported a mean value of 62.52 (SD = 7.04). From the mean values obtained, it can be seen that females had a slightly higher attitude towards assessment for learning than male teachers. When these values were tested using independent sample t-test, the result showed that a t-value of 0.631 was obtained at 496 degrees of freedom with a corresponding p-value of 0.529 which was greater than the chosen alpha. Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, it, therefore, indicates that there is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers towards assessment for learning. The null hypothesis was therefore retained.

**7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The result from the analysis as shown in Table 4.1 indicated that teachers who had a doctorate educational qualification were most disposed towards assessment for learning in educational institutions. This was closely followed by those who had a Masters degree, and then those with a Bachelors degree. The teachers who reported that there were teaching with NCE as their highest educational qualification had the least attitude towards assessment for learning. From this result, it is evident that the higher the educational qualification, the greater the tendency that a teacher will be positively disposed towards assessment for learning. The result also revealed that when test using ANOVA, the attitude of teachers towards assessment for learning differed significantly based on their educational qualification. Further analysis using multiple post hoc test revealed that significant differences exist in the attitude of NCE holders from Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate holders. The result further showed that significant differences exist between Bachelor and Masters Degree holders, Bachelor and Doctorate, but not between Masters and Doctorate holders.

The result that teachers who had higher educational qualification had a higher mean score on attitude towards assessment for learning than those with lower educational qualification was expected and not surprising. This is because those teachers with higher educational qualification must have undergone more specialized training on the importance of assessment for learning in the process of improving instruction. Furthermore, those with lower educational qualification might not have received significant training on the importance of assessment for learning.

The result from this is similar to that obtained by Eguzouwa (2016) who found out that among teachers in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, educational qualification is a significant determinant of the extent to which they implemented continuous assessment programmes. Despite the similarity in the result obtained, the study differed from that of Eguzouwa in that the sample used was different, as in the reported study only teachers from one local government area was used. In addition, the study considered Continuous Assessment, which is conceptually different from the focus of the present study, assessment for learning. In their study of the extent to which teachers utilize school-based assessment, Orluwene and Igwe (2016) found out that educational qualification does not have a significant impact on the extent to which teachers use it. This finding is different from that of the current study in that in their study educational qualification did not influence teachers' utilization of school-based assessment and their teachers qualifications were grouped as teachers with educational and without educational qualifications while in the present study teachers' educational qualification is a significant determinant of their attitude towards assessment for learning and their qualifications were grouped as NCE, Bachelor, Masters and PhD.

According to the result obtained on the extent to which gender determines teachers' attitude towards assessment for learning, it was shown that while females teachers had a slightly higher mean value in attitude towards continuous assessment, there was no significant difference in the extent to which they differed from male teachers. The meaning of this result is that both male and female teachers do not differ much in their attitude towards assessment for learning. This result is expected because it is this researcher's position that male and female operate in the same school environment and gender is less likely to be a factor in their attitude towards continuous assessment.

This result is similar to that obtained by Fakeye (2016) who found out among teachers in Ibadan, that gender was not a significant determinant of their attitude towards formative assessment and corrective feedback in the English Language. A similar result was obtained by Nneji et al (2012) in their study of assessment practice among science, technology and mathematics teachers in Nigeria. A look at the sample used will reveal that the while Fakeye used English teachers, and Nneji et al used Science, Technology and Mathematics teachers, the present study used samples composed of teachers from both science-based and non-science based areas.

## 8. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. In-service training should be provided for teachers, especially those with lower educational qualification, on the rubrics of assessment for learning. This is likely to increase their understanding and appreciation of the importance of assessment for learning in the instructional process, and improvement of students learning outcomes.
2. If needed, teachers should be granted leave of absence, especially those who have lower educational background, to go for further studies in specialized fields so they can learn how to integrate assessment for learning into their classroom instruction.
3. Both male and female teachers should be encouraged to learn more about assessment for learning. This is because as the study showed, there is no significant difference in the extent to which gender determines their attitude towards assessment for learning.

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