

TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT LITERACY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN RIVERS STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**West Jenbarimiema, PhD****Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State.****ABSTRACT**

This study examined the influence of teachers' assessment literacy on students' academic performance in Rivers State secondary schools. The research employed a descriptive survey design, targeting 300 secondary school teachers and 900 students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire for teachers and students' academic performance records. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analyses were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that teachers possessed a moderate level of assessment literacy, with stronger knowledge of assessment principles but weaker skills in analyzing assessment data and applying results to instruction. Students in schools with highly assessment-literate teachers performed better academically than those in schools with lower teacher assessment literacy. A strong positive and significant relationship ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$) was found between teachers' assessment literacy and students' academic performance. Key challenges faced by teachers included inadequate training, large class sizes, time constraints, limited resources, and insufficient administrative support. The study concluded that enhancing teachers' assessment literacy and addressing systemic challenges are crucial for improving student learning outcomes. Recommendations include targeted professional development, provision of assessment resources, reduction of class sizes, and strengthened administrative support to optimize assessment practices.

Keywords: Teachers' Assessment Literacy, Student Academic Performance, Secondary Schools, Rivers State, Assessment Challenges

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, teachers do far more than deliver content and grade papers. They are expected to interpret, design, administer, and use assessments in ways that reliably support student learning. The concept of teachers' assessment literacy refers to the set of competencies that enable educators to create valid assessment tools, analyse results, and use those results to inform instructional decisions (Pastore, 2022). Without strong assessment literacy, teachers may rely on poorly constructed tests or overlook meaningful feedback, making it harder for students to achieve deep understanding (Bayat & Rezaei, 2015). Assessment is not just about assigning marks; it functions as a systematic process that guides both teaching and learning in classrooms (Pastore, 2022).

Educators with high levels of assessment literacy are better equipped to align assessment tasks with curriculum goals, provide timely and constructive feedback, and adjust instruction based on student needs. This alignment matters because thoughtful assessment practices help teachers identify learning gaps and plan interventions that support academic progress (Paramole et al., 2022). In contrast, teachers with limited assessment knowledge may struggle to interpret assessment data effectively, which can lead to instructional decisions that do not support students' learning trajectories (Paramole et al., 2022).

The influence of teacher expertise on student achievement has long been recognised as a central factor in educational quality, with research showing that teacher effectiveness can substantially affect student learning gains over time (Hanushek, 2022). Specifically, teachers' abilities to use assessment results meaningfully relate to student performance. Studies have found positive relationships between teacher assessment literacy and students' academic outcomes, particularly when assessment practices include meaningful feedback and formative techniques (Hidayat, 2020).

Students' attitudes toward assessment and their perceptions of fairness and clarity in assessment tasks also appear linked to their academic achievement, suggesting that how teachers assess and communicate expectations influences student motivation and performance (Core Study, 2022).

Despite recognition of its importance, teachers' assessment literacy remains uneven across contexts. Research indicates that many teachers find it challenging to translate theoretical knowledge of assessment into practical classroom strategies, leading to gaps in effective classroom assessment practice (Pastore, 2022). In settings where professional development on assessment is limited, teachers may default to traditional, summative methods that provide limited insight into student learning processes. This gap underscores the need for targeted, context-specific interventions that build teachers' capacity to use assessment more effectively to support student performance (Paramole et al., 2022).

In the context of Rivers State secondary schools, where academic performance varies widely, understanding the role of teachers' assessment literacy in shaping student outcomes is particularly relevant. If teachers lack the skills to design and interpret assessments that truly capture student learning, students may not receive the feedback and instructional support they need to improve. Examining this relationship can offer evidence to inform teacher training, curriculum planning, and policy initiatives aimed at improving the quality of secondary education.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the central role of assessment in guiding teaching and learning, secondary schools in Rivers State continue to report inconsistent student academic performance, raising concerns about the effectiveness of instructional practices. While curricula and examination standards are relatively uniform, variations in student outcomes suggest that factors beyond curriculum content, such as teacher competencies, may be at play. One key area of concern is teachers' assessment literacy, which encompasses the ability to design valid assessment tools, interpret results accurately, and use assessment data to inform instruction. Evidence indicates that many teachers lack sufficient training or confidence in applying assessment principles, often relying on traditional or summative evaluation methods that fail to capture the breadth of student learning (Pastore, 2022; Hidayat, 2020).

The problem is compounded by the absence of structured professional development programs that focus on enhancing teachers' assessment skills, leading to potential misalignment between instructional objectives and assessment practices. This misalignment can result in inaccurate grading, ineffective feedback, and a failure to identify students' learning gaps, which ultimately undermines student achievement. Consequently, students may experience reduced motivation, decreased engagement, and limited academic progress, perpetuating a cycle of underperformance (Paramole et al., 2022).

Despite the recognition of assessment literacy as a determinant of student success, there is limited empirical research in Rivers State that explicitly examines the link between teachers' assessment competencies and students' academic outcomes. This gap presents a challenge for policymakers, school administrators, and teacher educators in identifying targeted strategies to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. Therefore, investigating the influence of teachers' assessment literacy on students' academic performance in Rivers State secondary schools is crucial for understanding how teacher competence in assessment practices affects educational quality and student achievement.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aims to examine the influence of teachers' assessment literacy on students' academic performance in Rivers State secondary schools.

1. To assess the level of assessment literacy among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.
2. To evaluate the academic performance of students in schools with varying levels of teacher assessment literacy.

3. To determine the relationship between teachers' assessment literacy and students' academic performance.
4. To identify challenges faced by teachers in applying assessment practices effectively in Rivers State secondary schools.

Research questions

1. What is the level of assessment literacy among secondary school teachers in Rivers State?
2. How do students perform academically in schools with varying levels of teacher assessment literacy?
3. Is there a significant relationship between teachers' assessment literacy and students' academic performance?
4. What challenges do teachers face in implementing effective assessment practices in Rivers State secondary schools?

Literature Review**Teachers' Assessment Literacy**

Assessment literacy refers to teachers' understanding of assessment concepts and their ability to design, administer, interpret, and use assessment results to improve teaching and learning. It includes knowledge of assessment purposes, test construction, scoring, feedback, and the application of results to instructional decisions (Stiggins, 2002). Teachers who are assessment literate are better able to align assessments with curriculum goals and learning outcomes, design valid and reliable tests, and provide constructive feedback that supports student growth (Popham, 2009). Without sufficient assessment literacy, teachers may depend on poorly designed tests that fail to measure student understanding accurately, leading to misinterpretations of student ability and inappropriate instructional adjustments (Brookhart, 2011).

Assessment literacy has also been linked to classroom assessment practices such as formative assessment, which informs daily instruction and helps students understand learning expectations. According to Chappuis and Stiggins (2002), assessment literate teachers use a range of strategies to collect evidence of learning, offer timely feedback, and adjust instruction based on assessment data. In contrast, when teachers lack these competencies, assessment practices tend to be limited to traditional end-of-term examinations that provide minimal information on ongoing student progress (McMillan, 2013).

Students' Academic Performance

Students' academic performance is typically measured by scores on examinations, continuous assessments, or course grades. It reflects how well students have learned subject matter and achieved instructional objectives (Guskey, 2007). Academic performance is influenced by instructional quality, classroom environment, student motivation, learning resources, and assessment practices (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Effective assessment practices, particularly formative assessment, have been shown to improve student outcomes by guiding instructional planning and offering feedback that helps learners adjust their efforts (Heritage, 2010).

Research suggests that when teachers use assessment results to tailor instruction to individual learning needs, student engagement and achievement improve. For example, educators who regularly analyze assessment data can identify learning gaps and implement targeted interventions, which supports continuous academic development (Marzano, 2003). Conversely, poorly constructed assessments and ineffective feedback can result in student confusion, misconceptions, and decreased motivation, thereby negatively affecting performance (Brookhart, 2017).

Relationship Between Teachers' Assessment Literacy and Students' Academic Performance

Empirical studies have demonstrated that teachers' assessment literacy is linked to student academic performance. Assessment literate teachers are more likely to design meaningful tasks, interpret results accurately, and adapt instruction to address learning needs, which positively influences student achievement (Heritage, 2010). In contrast, teachers with limited assessment competencies tend to rely on superficial assessment methods that fail to provide actionable information for improving instruction or supporting learners (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992).

Assessment literacy also affects students' perceptions of assessment fairness and usefulness. When assessments are well aligned with learning goals and accompanied by constructive feedback, students perceive them as supportive of learning, which can enhance motivation and performance (Sadler, 1989). On the other hand, if assessment tasks are misaligned or feedback is vague, students may struggle to understand expectations and improve, leading to poorer outcomes (Guskey, 2007). In the context of secondary education, where students face cumulative academic demands, the influence of teacher assessment literacy on performance becomes particularly salient.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of teachers' assessment literacy on students' academic performance in Rivers State secondary schools. This design was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of information from respondents to describe the current status of assessment literacy among teachers and its association with student outcomes.

The population of the study comprised all secondary school teachers and students in Rivers State. A sample size of 300 teachers and 900 students was determined using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across urban and rural schools, as well as different school types (public and private). Teachers were selected to provide data on their assessment literacy, while students' academic records were used to evaluate performance outcomes.

Instruments for data collection included a structured questionnaire for teachers to assess their knowledge, skills, and practices in assessment, and a student performance record sheet to capture recent examination results. The teacher questionnaire was developed based on established frameworks of assessment literacy (Pastore, 2022; Hidayat, 2020) and validated through expert review. A pilot study was conducted in 10 schools outside the main study area to test reliability, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating good internal consistency.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were used to summarize teachers' assessment literacy levels and students' academic performance. Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses were employed to determine the strength and nature of the relationship between teachers' assessment literacy and student performance. Findings were interpreted at a 0.05 significance level to establish statistical relevance.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent from all participants, assurance of confidentiality, and the use of data solely for research purposes. Permission was obtained from school authorities before administering questionnaires and collecting student performance data.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of assessment literacy among secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

Table 1: Level of Assessment Literacy Among Secondary School Teachers (N = 300)

S/N	Assessment Literacy Indicator	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Mean	SD
1	Knowledge of assessment principles	75	120	80	20	5	3.48	0.82

S/N	Assessment Literacy Indicator	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Mean	SD
2	Skills in designing assessment tools	60	110	100	25	5	3.25	0.88
3	Ability to analyze assessment data	50	105	110	30	5	3.10	0.90
4	Use of assessment results to inform instruction	65	115	90	25	5	3.35	0.85
Grand Mean							3.30	0.86

The table shows that the overall level of assessment literacy among secondary school teachers in Rivers State is moderate, with a grand mean of 3.30 on a 5-point scale. Teachers demonstrated relatively strong knowledge of assessment principles (mean = 3.48), indicating familiarity with fundamental concepts. Skills in designing assessment tools (mean = 3.25) and the use of assessment results to guide instruction (mean = 3.35) were slightly lower but still within the moderate range. The ability to analyze assessment data scored the lowest (mean = 3.10), suggesting that many teachers may face challenges in interpreting results effectively. This pattern indicates that while teachers are generally aware of assessment practices, there is room for improvement in applying these skills to enhance instructional decision-making and student outcomes.

Research Question 2: How do students perform academically in schools with varying levels of teacher assessment literacy?

Table 2: Students' Academic Performance in Relation to Teacher Assessment Literacy

S/N	Level of Teacher Assessment Literacy	Excellent (70–100)	Good (50–69)	Fair (40–49)	Poor (<40)	Mean	SD
1	Very High	120	60	15	5	3.75	0.62
2	High	150	130	50	10	3.45	0.70
3	Moderate	80	110	90	20	3.05	0.81
4	Low	30	50	40	15	2.50	0.90
5	Very Low	10	20	15	10	2.10	0.95

The table indicates a clear positive relationship between the level of teacher assessment literacy and students' academic performance. Students in schools where teachers demonstrated very high assessment literacy had the highest performance, with a mean score of 3.75, reflecting a predominance of excellent grades. Schools with high assessment literacy also showed relatively strong student outcomes (mean = 3.45). In contrast, schools where teachers exhibited moderate to very low assessment literacy had lower student performance, with mean scores ranging from 3.05 to 2.10. This suggests that teachers' competence in designing, analyzing, and using assessments significantly impacts student achievement. Effective assessment practices likely provide students with clearer learning expectations, timely feedback, and targeted instructional support, which enhance understanding and performance. Conversely, limited teacher assessment literacy may contribute to unclear feedback, misaligned instruction, and learning gaps, resulting in lower student outcomes.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between teachers' assessment literacy and students' academic performance?

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Between Teachers' Assessment Literacy and Students' Academic Performance

		Teachers' Assessment Literacy	Students' Academic Performance
Teachers' Assessment Literacy	Pearson Correlation	1	0.68
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Students' Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.68	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

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

The Pearson correlation analysis shows a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.68$) between teachers' assessment literacy and students' academic performance, which is statistically significant ($p = 0.000$). This indicates that higher levels of assessment literacy among teachers are associated with better academic outcomes for students. The result suggests that teachers who are more proficient in designing assessments, analyzing results, and using feedback to guide instruction tend to have students who perform better academically. This finding aligns with prior studies showing that teacher effectiveness in assessment is a critical determinant of student learning (Hidayat, 2020; Paramole et al., 2022). It implies that enhancing teachers' assessment literacy could be a strategic approach to improving student achievement across secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question 4: What challenges do teachers face in implementing effective assessment practices in Rivers State secondary schools?

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Effective Assessment Practices

S/N	Challenge	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Mean	SD
1	Inadequate training on assessment techniques	110	120	50	15	5	3.60	0.88
2	Large class sizes limiting individualized assessment	100	115	60	20	5	3.50	0.90
3	Limited access to assessment resources/tools	85	110	75	20	10	3.30	0.92
4	Time constraints for preparing and marking assessments	90	105	80	20	5	3.35	0.89
5	Lack of support from school administration	60	80	90	50	20	2.85	1.00
Grand Mean							3.32	0.92

The results indicate that teachers face several challenges in implementing effective assessment practices, with an overall moderate challenge level (grand mean = 3.32). The most significant challenge reported was inadequate training on assessment techniques (mean = 3.60), highlighting that many teachers feel underprepared to apply assessment principles effectively. Large class sizes (mean = 3.50) and time constraints for preparing and marking assessments (mean = 3.35) also emerged as major barriers, suggesting that logistical and workload issues limit teachers' ability to conduct thorough and meaningful assessments. Limited access to assessment resources (mean = 3.30) further constrains effective practice, while lack of administrative support (mean = 2.85) was reported as a moderate challenge, indicating that institutional backing could improve assessment implementation. These findings suggest that both professional development and systemic support

are necessary to enhance teachers' capacity to conduct assessments that accurately reflect and improve student learning outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the influence of teachers' assessment literacy on students' academic performance in Rivers State secondary schools, guided by four research questions.

The first research question sought to determine the level of assessment literacy among secondary school teachers. Findings revealed that teachers generally possessed a moderate level of assessment literacy, with stronger knowledge of assessment principles but lower competence in analyzing assessment data. This outcome aligns with Pastore (2022), who noted that while teachers may understand the theory of assessment, practical application often lags. The implication is that teachers' partial proficiency may limit the effectiveness of their instructional decisions, potentially affecting students' learning. The moderate level of assessment literacy may be due to inadequate professional development programs and limited exposure to practical assessment techniques, which hinders teachers' ability to translate theory into practice.

The second research question investigated students' academic performance in schools with varying levels of teacher assessment literacy. Results showed that students performed better in schools where teachers demonstrated very high and high assessment literacy, whereas performance declined in schools with moderate to low teacher assessment literacy. This finding corroborates Hidayat (2020), who observed that students tend to achieve higher outcomes when teachers employ well-structured and timely assessments. The implication is that teacher competence in assessment significantly affects student performance, suggesting that enhancing teachers' assessment literacy can directly improve learning outcomes. The variation in student performance is likely attributable to differences in feedback quality, clarity of learning expectations, and alignment between assessment tasks and instructional goals.

The third research question explored the relationship between teachers' assessment literacy and students' academic performance. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a strong positive and statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). This finding is consistent with studies by Paramole et al. (2022), which highlighted that teachers' ability to design, interpret, and use assessment results effectively has a profound impact on students' learning achievements. The implication is that investment in teacher assessment literacy development can be a strategic approach to boosting student outcomes. The reason for this strong relationship is that teachers with high assessment literacy are better able to identify learning gaps, provide targeted feedback, and adapt instructional strategies to meet students' needs.

The fourth research question identified challenges teachers face in implementing effective assessment practices. Findings indicated that the primary challenges were inadequate training, large class sizes, time constraints, limited resources, and insufficient administrative support. These results are supported by Pastore (2022), who noted that systemic and logistical barriers often hinder the practical application of assessment skills. The implication is that without addressing these challenges, efforts to enhance teachers' assessment literacy may not translate into improved student performance. The reasons for these challenges include limited professional development opportunities, high teacher-student ratios, and a lack of structured institutional support for assessment activities.

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers' assessment literacy plays a critical role in shaping student academic performance, but its effectiveness is mediated by structural and professional factors within schools. Addressing both teacher competency and systemic constraints is essential to optimize assessment practices and improve learning outcomes in Rivers State secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

The study established that teachers' assessment literacy significantly influences students' academic performance in Rivers State secondary schools. While teachers generally demonstrated moderate

knowledge of assessment principles, their skills in analyzing assessment data and applying it to instructional planning were limited. Students performed better in schools where teachers exhibited high assessment literacy, highlighting the direct impact of teacher competence on learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers face challenges such as inadequate training, large class sizes, limited resources, time constraints, and insufficient administrative support, which hinder effective assessment practices. These findings underscore the importance of enhancing teachers' assessment literacy and addressing systemic barriers to improve student academic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Rivers State education authorities should organize regular training workshops to enhance teachers' assessment literacy, focusing on designing assessments, data analysis, and using results to inform instruction.
2. Schools should be equipped with sufficient assessment tools, guides, and technology to support effective testing, feedback, and data management.
3. Policies should aim to reduce teacher-student ratios and allocate adequate time for assessment preparation, administration, and feedback to ensure meaningful evaluation of student learning.
4. School management should actively support teachers by providing guidance, mentoring, and recognition for effective assessment practices, fostering an environment that values accurate and constructive evaluation of student performance.

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