

A Comparison of Perceptions of Assessment Practices in Higher Institutions between Academic Staff and Students: A Case Study of Federal College of Education, Yola

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Abstract: This research study aims to explore the assessment practices in higher education, with a particular focus on the Federal College of Education, Yola, and to investigate the perceptions of academic staff and students regarding these practices. The research is driven by two assumptions: (1) academic staff prioritize grading and formal accountability over students' learning improvement, and (2) academic staff and students perceive the goals of assessment practices differently. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 12 academic staff members and 84 Professional Diploma in Education (PDE) students. The findings of the study reveal that academic staff and students view assessment practices as a formative tool. However, there were inconsistencies between their perceptions and actual practices, with academic staff not frequently employing self- and peer-assessment and feedback and students having similar experiences. Moreover, there were disparities in how academic staff and students viewed different aspects of assessment practices, including the use of assessments, variety of assessment activities, and feedback's role in enhancing learning outcomes. The study's findings support the hypothesis that academic staff and students perceive the purposes of assessment practices differently. Based on these findings, several recommendations are suggested, including establishing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate assessment practices, addressing the challenges of implementing effective assessment practices in large class sizes, and considering a standards-based approach to assessment. Furthermore, the study suggests exploring the effectiveness of self- and peer-assessment in larger classes and investigating how feedback can enhance student learning. Finally, the study proposes exploring the feasibility of implementing a standards-based approach to assessment in larger class sizes.

Keywords: Academic Staff, Students, Assessment Practices, Perceptions, Standards-Based Approach, Higher Institutions, Nigeria

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1. Introduction

Assessment practices play a vital role in higher education's teaching and learning process, serving as a bridge between instructional objectives and students' learning outcomes (Goss, 2022). Assessments enable educators to measure the extent to which students have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary for their academic and professional development. Furthermore, assessment practices provide students with valuable feedback on their performance, helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses and promoting self-regulated learning. In the context of higher education institutions, it is essential to understand and compare the perceptions of both academic staff and students regarding these practices to ensure the effectiveness of the assessment process and enhance the overall quality of education. Assessment practices are fundamental aspects of the teaching and learning process in higher education institutions, as they provide valuable information on students' understanding, skills, and abilities, and enable academic staff to determine the effectiveness of their instructional methods (Brown & Glasner, 2003). In recent years, there has been growing concern about the alignment between assessment practices and learning outcomes in higher education (Carless, 2015). This concern has been fueled by the increasing demand for transparency, accountability, and quality assurance in higher education, as well as the need to ensure that graduates are well-equipped with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required in the 21st-century labor market (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014). Given the importance of assessment practices, it is crucial to gain an understanding of the viewpoints of academic staff members and students, as these perspectives can offer insights into the effectiveness of current assessment methods and inform improvements that can better support student learning (Boud, 1990).

The literature on assessment practices in higher education is vast and varied, encompassing different dimensions such as assessment types, purposes, and stakeholders. Several studies have focused on comparing the perceptions of different stakeholders (e.g., students, academic staff, and administrators) regarding assessment practices in higher education (DeLuca, Lapointe-Mcewan, & Luhanga, 2016; Gikandi, Morrow, & Davis, 2011; Mäkipää & Ouakrim-Soivio, 2019). These studies reveal that students and academic staff may have divergent views on the effectiveness, fairness, and relevance of assessment practices, which can impact their engagement and satisfaction with the assessment process (Pettersson, 2018). One critical aspect of assessment in higher education is the alignment between assessment practices and intended learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Research has shown that when academic staff and students perceive a strong alignment between these two aspects, they are more likely to engage in meaningful learning experiences (Norton, Norton, & Sadler, 2012). In contrast, a misalignment between assessment practices and intended learning outcomes can lead to superficial learning and reduced motivation among students (Scouller, 1998). Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the viewpoints of both academic staff and students on how assessment practices align with the intended learning outcomes. This understanding is essential for enhancing the quality of education in higher institutions.

Another essential dimension of assessment practices in higher education is the use of formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments, which are conducted during the learning process, aim to provide ongoing feedback to students, enabling them to improve their understanding and performance (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Summative assessments, on the other hand, are conducted at the end of a learning period to evaluate students' overall achievement (Harlen, 2005). Research has shown that formative

assessments can promote deeper learning and foster self-regulated learning among students (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). However, summative assessments are often perceived as high-stakes, potentially leading to increased stress and anxiety among students (Zeidner, 2007). Consequently, examining the perceptions of academic staff and students regarding the use and effectiveness of formative and summative assessments in higher institutions can provide valuable insights into the potential impact of these assessment types on student learning and well-being. In addition to the dimensions mentioned above, the literature on assessment practices in higher education has also highlighted the importance of understanding the cultural and contextual factors that may influence stakeholders' perceptions of these practices (Carless, 2015). In the Nigerian context, where the current study is situated, research has revealed several challenges associated with assessment practices in higher institutions, such as inadequate resources, a lack of appropriate training for academic staff, and cultural biases. These challenges have the potential to affect the reliability and validity of assessment practices and can result in differences in the views of academic staff and students.

Several studies have investigated the factors influencing the quality and effectiveness of assessment practices in higher education. Some of these factors include academic staff's assessment literacy, institutional support, and students' engagement in the assessment process. Assessment literacy refers to the knowledge and skills required to design, implement, and evaluate assessments effectively (Xu & Brown, 2016). Research has shown that academic staff with higher levels of assessment literacy tend to adopt more student-centered assessment practices, which can lead to better learning outcomes for students. Thus, understanding the views of academic staff members and students regarding assessment literacy is essential for improving assessment practices in higher institutions. Institutional support is another crucial factor that can influence the effectiveness of assessment practices in higher education. Institutional support refers to the resources, policies, and structures provided by higher institutions to facilitate the development and implementation of effective assessment practices (Kuh et al., 2014). Research has demonstrated that when academic staff and students perceive high levels of institutional support for assessment practices, they are more likely to be satisfied with the assessment process and experience better learning outcomes (Kuh et al., 2014). Therefore, examining the perceptions of academic staff and students concerning institutional support for assessment practices can provide valuable insights into the potential barriers and facilitators of effective assessment in higher institutions.

Students' engagement in the assessment process is another vital aspect of assessment practices in higher education. Engaging students in the assessment process can lead to increased motivation, better learning outcomes, and a greater sense of ownership over their learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2007). Research has shown that students who are actively involved in the assessment process, such as participating in self-assessment or peer assessment activities, tend to develop a deeper understanding of the assessment criteria and learning outcomes (Carless & Boud, 2018). On the other hand, the literature indicates that there may be divergent views between academic staff and students concerning the benefits and efficacy of involving students in the assessment process (Boud, Lawson, & Thompson, 2013). Thus, exploring the perceptions of academic staff and students regarding student engagement in assessment practices can offer valuable insights into the potential benefits and challenges associated with this aspect of assessment in higher institutions.

A number of factors may influence the perceptions of assessment practices among academic staff and students. These factors can be broadly categorized into individual factors (e.g., personal beliefs and experiences), contextual factors (e.g., institutional policies and culture), and assessment-related factors (e.g., assessment design, feedback practices) (Nicol, 2010). By examining these factors, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape the perceptions of academic staff and students, as well as the potential reasons for any discrepancies between their views. Several theoretical frameworks have been proposed to explain the different perspectives of academic staff and students on assessment practices. One such framework is the Assessment Triangle, which posits that assessment involves three interconnected components: the cognitive, the observational, and the interpretive (Grisham-Brown et al., 2001). According to this framework, differences in the perceptions of assessment practices may arise from variations in the ways that academic staff and students approach each of these components. For example, academic staff may place greater emphasis on the cognitive component (i.e., the knowledge, skills, and competencies being assessed), while students may be more focused on the observational component (i.e., the specific assessment tasks and their perceived fairness) (Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2005).

Another relevant theoretical perspective is the concept of assessment literacy, which refers to understanding assessment principles, processes, and practices among academic staff and students (Price, Handley, Millar, & O'donovan, 2010). Research suggests that there is often a gap in assessment literacy between academic staff and students, which may contribute to differing perceptions of assessment practices (Smith, Worsfold, Davies, Fisher, & McPhail, 2013). For instance, academic staff may have a deeper understanding of the underlying principles of assessment and the rationale behind certain assessment methods, while students may be more focused on the immediate consequences of assessment (e.g., grades, workload) (Price et al., 2010). By exploring the potential differences in assessment literacy between academic staff and students, this study aims to shed light on the factors that contribute to their divergent perceptions of assessment practices. In addition to the theoretical perspectives mentioned above, several empirical studies have investigated the perceptions of academic staff and students on assessment practices in higher education. For example, Struyven et al. (2005) conducted a study comparing the preferences of academic staff and students for different types of assessment tasks and found that while both groups valued authentic and real-life assessment tasks, students tended to prefer multiple-choice questions and short-answer tasks, which they perceived as less demanding and more objective. Similarly, Maclellan (2001) reported that academic staff and students had different views on the role of formative assessment in promoting learning, with academic staff emphasizing the importance of feedback and reflection, while students focused on the usefulness of formative assessment in preparing for summative assessments.

The objectives of this study are to (i) Examine the perception of students of FCE, Yola, on the formative and summative assessment practices of the college. (ii) Determine the perception of lecturers on assessment practices in FCE, Yola. And lastly, (iii) Determine the influence of assessment practices in FCE, Yola, on academic performance and teaching excellence.

To achieve the study's objectives, a mixed-methods research design will be employed, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. A questionnaire will be administered to

a representative sample of academic staff and students at the Federal College of Education, Yola, to gather information on their perceptions of various aspects of assessment practices, including assessment design, feedback practices, and the role of assessment in promoting learning. In addition, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a smaller sample of academic staff and students to gain deeper insights into their experiences, beliefs, and expectations related to assessment practices. The data collected through the questionnaire and interviews will be analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as thematic analysis techniques, to identify patterns and trends in the perceptions of academic staff and students. The findings of this study will be discussed in light of the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, with a focus on the implications of these findings for assessment practices in higher education institutions.

In conclusion, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the perceptions of academic staff and students on assessment practices in higher education, with a specific focus on the Federal College of Education, Yola. By comparing the perspectives of both groups, the study seeks to shed light on the factors that shape these perceptions and the potential discrepancies between them. The findings of this study are expected to inform improvements in assessment practices in higher education institutions, ultimately supporting student learning and promoting a culture of assessment that is transparent, accountable, and aligned with desired learning outcomes.

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Introduction

Using a descriptive survey approach, this research aimed to examine the aim of assessment practices in a particular program offered by a Higher Education Institution in Nigeria. The research was guided by a specific research question, which informed the development of survey questionnaires and follow-up interviews. Both academic staff and students at FCE, Yola participated in this study. The research question was based on the educational reforms in Nigeria and their influence on learning programs and assessment practices. This approach was used to clarify the purpose of the study and to outline the research design and methods used.

2.2 Research Design

The current study involved the participation of academic staff and postgraduate diploma students in the education program at FCE, Yola, with the primary aim of exploring potential differences in their perspectives on the purpose of assessment practices within this program. The study also aimed to identify any potential challenges that could hinder the implementation of effective assessment practices. To achieve these aims, a descriptive survey research design was utilized, as described by Rahi (2017), which involves collecting and analyzing data from a representative sample of individuals or items from the target population. The authors used the real-life context of the participants to illustrate the concepts presented in the study. To classify this research as a case study, the authors used Merriam's (1988) definition of a case study, which is characterized by its particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive qualities. These characteristics are examined in the study to justify its classification as a case study and explain their relevance to this particular research.

2.3 Research Methodology

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), case studies are generally linked to the interpretive research tradition instead of the quantitative paradigm. However, Yin Robert (1994) warns against conflating the case study approach with qualitative research since case studies can include a combination of both qualitative and quantitative evidence. This study utilized a mixed-method design with a primary emphasis on quantitative data while including qualitative data. This was based on the argument by Miles and Huberman (1994) that qualitative data can complement, validate, explain, clarify, or reinterpret quantitative data from the same context.

The study focused on academic staff and students in the postgraduate diploma in education program at the Federal College of Education, Yola. A case study approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. The primary research approach in this study is quantitative, with a secondary qualitative method to supplement the quantitative approach. The rationale for using the qualitative method alongside the quantitative method was based on two reasons: to provide a broader perspective and to complement or nest within the quantitative approach. This study was influenced by previous research conducted by Maclellan (2001) in Scotland and the Learning Oriented Assessment Project (LOAP) in Hong Kong. Maclellan's study aimed to describe the experiences of staff and students regarding assessment practices in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Strathclyde. The LOAP survey, conducted in 2005, aimed to determine the perceptions of Hong Kong academics and students regarding assessment practices and purposes. This study adopted the same theoretical models as Maclellan's study, and the survey questionnaire used in these studies was adapted slightly as the quantitative research instrument for this current study. Detailed modifications to the questionnaire are discussed in this section.

2.4 Sampling and Data Collection

In this study, a total of 96 participants were involved in data collection. Among them were 12 academic staff members and 84 students who were pursuing the Post Graduate Diploma (PDE) in the education programme. A standardised questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from both the academic staff and PDE students. The reason for choosing PDE students was that they were presumed to have a more comprehensive understanding of assessment practices after gaining experience in a higher education system. To collect qualitative data, a convenience sampling method was employed to select respondents for semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen because it provided easy access to participants and did not have to be representative of any group apart from itself. The two academic staff members interviewed were selected based on their approaches to assessment. Additionally, students were asked to volunteer for interviews through a question included in the questionnaire.

2.5 Data Collection and Procedure

The research utilized a questionnaire survey and interviews with academic staff and students as instruments for measuring information. The survey was conducted to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the assessment practices in the program being studied. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept anonymous, which allowed them to be honest, especially when discussing

sensitive or controversial issues. To compare the perceptions of academic staff and students, two parallel versions of the questionnaire were created, with one for each group. The questionnaire used in this study was based on the LOAP questionnaire but was adapted to fit the specific research questions. It consisted of three sections, each serving a specific purpose in collecting information about the perceptions and practices of assessment.

The purpose of Part A of the LOAP questionnaire was to determine the level of agreement between academics and students regarding the general purposes of assessment. In this study, the rating scale was modified to include "very important" for agree and "not important" for disagree. Additionally, a new question was added to ask respondents to rank the top three important purposes. These changes were made to investigate any differences in the perceived importance of assessment purposes between academic staff and students. To measure the responses, a four-point Likert scale was used, with scores ranging from 1 for "not important" to 4 for "very important." Part A of the questionnaire was designed to address the first research question, which focused on the perceptions of academic staff and students on the general purposes of assessment.

The purpose of Part B in the questionnaire was to ascertain the perceived frequency of learning-oriented assessment practices among academic staff and students. A four-point frequency scale was used in the questionnaire without the "not sure" option, which was previously included in the LOAP questionnaire. An additional question was included in Section B of the staff questionnaire to inquire how they assess their students to achieve the purposes they consider important. This modification was intended to allow participants to make a definitive choice and gain a broader understanding of the link between their perceptions of assessment purpose and their actual practice. The second part of Section B remained unaltered. The objective of Part B was to address the second and third research questions, specifically, how the perspectives of academic staff on the purpose of assessment align with their practices, and if there is any discrepancy in the perceptions of academic staff and students concerning the purpose of assessment in their actual assessment practices.

Part C of the LOAP questionnaire remained unchanged and was utilized to gather open-ended comments related to the challenges of effective assessment practices, which was the fourth research question. Despite being a standardized questionnaire, the adapted version was pilot tested with two academic staff members and two students who were not part of the study. The primary purpose of the pilot testing was to identify any difficulties that respondents might experience while answering the questions and to ensure that the questions were interpreted correctly. However, the validation/piloting session did not aim to determine the reasons for or how the participants responded. Additionally, due to time constraints, only one comment was received regarding the technical layout of the questions in the final questionnaire.

The study also included qualitative data collection through interviews, which were conducted to confirm and supplement the information gathered in Part B of the questionnaire. The interviews followed a semi-structured format based on the key pillars of assessment practice in higher education, specifically focusing on "Why do you assess?" and "How do you assess?" as outlined by Falchikov (2005) and Makoni (2000). For students, the questions were directed at their perceived experiences of assessment practices within the specific program over the past three years. According to Walford (1994), individual interviews should be conducted in a private setting with one person at a time to ensure that participants feel comfortable

expressing themselves truthfully. In this study, academic staff members and students were interviewed separately to prevent discomfort or victimization and to ensure that students were not implicated in any way.

2.6 Data Analysis

The data collected in the study were analyzed using a mixed-method approach. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) argue that using a mix of methods to analyze data can provide more comprehensive descriptions by yielding different types of data. When only one method is used, the level of detail may be reduced. The mixed-method approach combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques to extract more meaning from the data, which can help researchers better understand the phenomena under investigation (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie) cited in (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The quantitative data was analysed by using face value analysis. The qualitative data (interview) was analysed by transcribing the data verbatim into a Word document. An effort was made to read the transcribed document severally before beginning the process of analysis.

3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

3.1 Introduction

The methodology used in this study involved a mixed-method design. This means that the study employed both a quantitative method in the form of a questionnaire, which provided guidance for the research, as well as a qualitative approach through interviews. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data is beneficial when there is a need to supplement, validate, explain, illuminate, or reinterpret the quantitative data collected from the same setting.

The study utilized a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to collect data from academic staff and students who participated in the PDE programme. The main aim of this research was to address the following research question: How do academic staff and students of FCE perceive the purpose of their actual assessment practices?

To investigate the research question, the study formulated the following sub-questions:

- What are the general purposes of assessment, and how do academic staff and students perceive and rank them?
- How do the practices of academic staff relate to their views on the purpose of assessment?
- Are there differences between the perceptions of staff and students regarding the purpose of assessment within their actual assessment practices?
- What challenges do staff and students perceive as hindering effective assessment practices?

This part of the study centers on explaining the process of data collection and analysis and presents the findings of the research, along with an interpretation.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

3.2.1 Quantitative Data

In order to gather quantitative data, a survey questionnaire was administered to 12 academic staff members and 84 PDE students. The questionnaire had two versions - one for academic staff members and another for students and aimed to collect their perceptions on assessment purposes and actual practices.

The survey questionnaire was divided into three parts: Part A, which focused on assessment purposes, Part B, which explored perceived experiences of actual assessment practices; and Part C, which identified assessment challenges for effective assessment. Both academic staff members and students completed the questionnaire, and the results will be presented according to these three parts. A simple mean was used to analyze the quantitative data, with any item scoring 3.05 or higher being accepted and any item scoring below 3.05 being rejected.

3.2.2 Qualitative Data

The qualitative data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews with two academic staff members and two students to gain a deeper understanding of their actual assessment practices. The interviews were guided by two main questions: "Why do you assess?" and "How do you assess?" These questions aimed to explore the perceived purposes of their actual assessment practices and to supplement and validate the quantitative data. While the interviews began with these questions, the participants were encouraged to elaborate on their answers, particularly when their responses were vague or deemed valuable.

3.3 Results and Interpretation

The findings obtained from the main tool, the questionnaire, will be presented first, followed by some chosen outcomes from the follow-up interviews to verify or enhance the quantitative results.

Part A of the questionnaire included two questions, with question A1 asking academic staff and students to rate the general purposes of assessment on a scale of Very Important (4), Important (3), Less Important (2), and Not Important (1). Table 2 contained fourteen purposes, and academic staff and students rated the purposes according to their preferences. The results were presented in frequencies and percentages. Cross tabulations of Table 1 were evaluated on face value. Items 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 13 appeared to be similar between academic staff and students. However, two items, "To motivate deep learning" (Item 12) and "To monitor teachers' teaching performance" (Item 14) were questioned at face value. Among the academic staff, 83.3% (n=10) considered Item 12 as 'Very important,' while 47.6% (n= 40) of the students viewed it as 'Very important' and 51.2% (n=43) as 'Important.' Among the academic staff, 50.0% (n= 6) believed that the evaluation of teaching performance (Item 14) was 'Very important,' while only 34.5% (n=29) of the students considered it 'Very important.'

The first question in Part A of the questionnaire aimed to understand how academic staff and students perceive the general purposes of assessment. The second question of Part A required them to choose the

three most important purposes from the provided table and rank them in order of importance. The rankings obtained from this question were used to address the first research question:

How do academic staff and students perceive/rank the different purposes of assessment?

Table 2 demonstrates the prioritization of the significant purposes as perceived by academic staff members, while Table 3 showcases the ranking of the most crucial objectives according to students' perspectives

Table 1: Perceptions of academic staff and students on the general purposes of assessment

	ACADEMIC STAFF (n= 12)								STUDENTS (n= 84)							
	Very important		Important		Less important		Not important		Very important		Important		Less important		Not important	
	Freq	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1.1 To identify essential abilities students have acquired	9	75.0	3	12.0	0	0	0	0	55	65.5	29	34.5	0	0	0	0
1.2 To recognise students' misunderstanding of the subject matter	10	83.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0	42	50.0	30	35.7	12	14.3	0	0
1.3 To provide feedback to students about their learning	10	83.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0	53	63.1	29	34.5	2	2.4	0	0
1.4 To measure students' learning/improvement over time	8	66.7	4	33.3	0	0	0	0	41	48.8	35	41.7	8	9.5	0	0
1.5 To encourage rote-learning	2	16.7	2	16.7	8	66.7	0	0	12	14.3	30	35.7	25	29.8	17	20.2

Table 2: Academic staff's ranking of the three most important purposes

S/N		Frequency	Percentage
1	To determine the crucial skills that students had acquired	2	16.7
2	To recognize any misunderstandings among students related to a particular subject matter	1	8.3
3	To furnish feedback regarding the progression of students' learning over a period of time	0	0
4	To assess the academic development of students over a period of time	1	8.3
5	To encourage memorization-based learning.	0	0
6	To promote the practical implementation of knowledge acquired	0	0
7	To cultivate students' capacity to evaluate themselves	0	0
8	To enhance students' capacity to evaluate their peers	0	0
9	To develop students' ability to learn by themselves	0	0
10	To equip students for their future professional endeavors	4	33.3
11	To assign grades and rank students accordingly	0	0
12	To encourage deep learning	1	8.3
13	To guarantee that students satisfy the necessary standards for a qualification	3	25.0
14	To assess your teaching effectiveness or monitor your teaching progress	0	0

Academic staff ranked the three most significant purposes of assessment as follows: equip students for their future professional endeavors (Item 10), To guarantee that students satisfy the necessary standards for a qualification (Item 13), and to determine the crucial skills that students had acquired (Item 1). It is worth noting that academic staff did not consider feedback provision, rote learning, real-life application, peer assessment, grades or marks, or monitoring teaching performance as important.

Table 3: Students' ranking of the three most important purposes

		Frequency	Percentage
1	To determine the crucial skills that students had acquired	16	19.1
2	To recognize any misunderstandings among students related to a particular subject matter	8	9.5
3	To furnish feedback regarding the progression of students' learning over a period of time	7	8.3
4	To assess the academic development of students over a period of time	6	7.1
5	To encourage memorization-based learning.	0	0
6	To promote the practical implementation of knowledge acquired	22	26.2
7	To cultivate students' capacity to evaluate themselves	2	2.4
8	To enhance students' capacity to evaluate their peers	0	0
9	To develop students' ability to learn by themselves	1	1.2
10	To equip students for their future professional endeavors	25	29.8
11	To assign grades and rank students accordingly	0	0
12	To encourage deep learning	6	7.1
13	To guarantee that students satisfy the necessary standards for a qualification	8	9.5
14	To assess your teaching effectiveness or monitor your teaching progress	2	2.4

Both academic staff members and students have ranked the two most important purposes of assessment similarly. The top two purposes are to equip students for their future professional endeavors. (Item 10) and to determine the crucial skills that students had acquired (Item 1). However, there is a difference in perception when it comes to the third most important purpose of assessment. Students rank the encouragement of practical application of learning (Item 6) as important, while academic staff members rank the need to guarantee that students satisfy the necessary standards for a qualification. (Item 13) as important. It is important to note that none of the academic staff members considered the encouragement of real-life application of learning (Item 6) as important, but 26.2% of the students (n=22) did.

It is worth noting that there were similarities between the perceptions of academic staff and students regarding the unimportance of rote learning, peer assessment, grades, or marks. The second and third research questions were addressed in Part B of the questionnaire. For the first question in Part B, academic staff was required to specify how they assessed their students to achieve the important purposes. Since this was an open-ended question, the responses were obtained from the questionnaire. In order to validate and clarify the responses from the questionnaire, two academic staff members were interviewed.

The next results will address the second research question:

How do the views of academic staff on the purpose of assessment relate to their practices?

The answers provided to the first question of Part B, concerning how academic staff assesses their students to achieve their stated purposes, were not very specific. This can be seen as a weakness in the questionnaire instrument. Instead, participants should have been asked to connect their assessment practices to each of the three important purposes they ranked. Some responses were given without being linked to the specific important purpose, and below are a few examples:

Regular tests.

The students write test and exams which they must prepare for in depth.

We provide feedback without delay.

Mid—semester assessments.

Impromptu tests.

Based on the data, it can be inferred that the perceptions of the purpose of assessment and academic staff's assessment practices fall along a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum, assessment involves testing a student's ability to reproduce information through methods like writing tests and examinations, while on the other end, it involves evaluating their ability to integrate, transform and utilize information in a purposeful way, such as through class discussions. To gain more clarity on how academic staff's perceived purposes of assessment align with their actual practices, the researchers conducted follow-up interviews with two academic staff members on why they assess their students and how they do it. These interviews yielded similar results to the questionnaire, indicating that the relationship between perceived purposes of assessment and actual practices falls along a continuous sequence.

In the second question of part B, academic staff members and students were required to rate their experiences of their actual assessment practices over the past year. The participants had to rate their experiences on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 meant "Never" and 4 meant "Always." The ratings were based on their perceptions/experiences of the learning-oriented activities presented in Table 4. This section aims to address the third research question.

Is there a difference in academic staff and students' perceptions concerning the purpose of assessment within their actual assessment practices?

At first glance, there are no significant differences between the responses of academic staff and students for items 1 to 4, 6 to 11, 13, 15 to 17. However, there are differences in items 5, 12, and 14. The discrepancies between the perceptions of academic staff and students are particularly noteworthy for these three items. For item 5, 65.5% of students (n=55) believed that more than one assessment activity was often used, while 66.7% of academic staff (n=8) believed that more than one assessment activity was always used. For item 12, 58.7% of academic staff (n=7) believed that detailed feedback was sometimes given to students, whereas 83.3% of students (n=70) believed that it was never given. Finally, for item 14,

75% of academic staff (n=9) believed that students were given comments on their learning progress sometimes, whereas students' responses were divided between sometimes (47.6%, n=40) and never (50.0%, n=42). Table 4 presents the perceptions of both academic staff and students.

Table 4: The perceptions of both academic staff and students

		ACADEMIC STAFF PERCEPTIONS								STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS							
		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never	
		Freq (F)	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
B1	The assessment proved to be beneficial and pragmatic, as students were able to learn from it.	5	41.7	7	58.3	0	0	0	0	25	29.8	55	65.5	4	4.8	0	0
B2	I communicated to my students the specific learning outcomes that were going to be evaluated, such as critical thinking, among others.	2	16.7	2	16.7	8	66.7	0	0	7	8.3	8	9.5	57	67.9	12	14.3

		ACADEMIC STAFF PERCEPTIONS								STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS							
		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never	
		Freq (F)	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
B3	During the assessment, I ensured that the students were informed about the marking scheme and the specific criteria that were used to evaluate their performance.	0	0	3	12.0	4	33.3	5	41.7	7	8.3	8	9.5	55	65.5	14	16.7
B4	The assessment criteria were determined with the participation of the students.	1	8.3	1	8.3	3	12.0	7	58.3	1	1.2	3	3.6	19	22.5	61	72.6
B5	Several assessment activities, including but not limited to case studies, essays, etc., were employed.	8	66.7	2	16.7	2	16.7	0	0	8	9.5	55	65.5	19	22.5	2	2.4
B6	The students were evaluated at the start of the modules/courses.	0	0	0	0	2	16.7	10	83.3	0	0	0	0	8	9.5	76	90.5

		ACADEMIC STAFF PERCEPTIONS								STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS							
		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never	
		Freq (F)	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
B7	Students were assessed during the modules/courses (formative)	10	83.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0	57	67.9	25	29.8	2	2.4	0	0
B8	Students were evaluated at the end of the modules/courses	12	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	84	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
B9	Before submitting their assignments, students were provided with guidance and feedback on their drafts and outlines.	1	8.3	2	16.7	4	33.3	5	41.7	8	9.5	8	9.5	12	14.3	56	66.7
B10	Detailed feedback was provided to the students, which supported the grade or mark awarded for their assignments.	0	0	1	8.3	5	41.7	6	50.0	2	2.4	8	9.5	40	47.6	34	45.2

		ACADEMIC STAFF PERCEPTIONS								STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS							
		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never	
		Freq (F)	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
B11	Detailed feedback was provided to the students, which helped them improve their next assignments	2	16.7	2	16.7	4	33.3	4	33.3	8	9.5	8	9.5	40	47.6	28	33.3
B12	Detailed feedback was provided to the students, which helped them to better understand the subject/discipline	2	16.7	2	16.7	7	58.3	1	8.3	0	0	2	2.4	12	14.3	70	83.3
B13	Actions were taken, such as tutorials, etc., to enhance student learning following the feedback provided.	0	0	1	8.3	6	50.0	5	41.7	0	0	2	2.4	12	14.3	70	83.3
B14	Throughout the modules, students received comments on their progress in learning.	1	8.3	2	16.7	9	75.0	0	0	0	0	2	2.4	40	47.6	42	50.0

		ACADEMIC STAFF PERCEPTIONS								STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS							
		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never	
		Freq (F)	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
B15	Double marking was used (moderation)	0	0	0	0	10	83.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0	10	11.9	74	88.1
B16	The assessment activities also included peer assessment, where students graded or marked each other's work	1	8.3	1	8.3	5	41.7	5	41.7	0	0	2	2.4	72	85.7	10	11.9
B17	The assessment activities also involved self-assessment, where students graded or marked their own work.	0	0	0	0	3	12.0	9	72.0	0	0	0	0	2	2.4	82	97.6

The challenges faced by academic staff are presented in Table 5, while Table 6 shows the challenges encountered by students.

Table 5: Results of the challenges for academic staff

S/N	Challenges to effective assessment practices	Frequency	Percentage
1	Non-availability of adequate resources	12	100.0
2	Large student population	12	100.0
3	Poor primary and secondary education foundation	7	58.3
4	Negative attitudes from students	2	16.7
5	Lack of skills from students	3	12.0
6	Curriculum structure	1	8.3
7	Poor language skills	6	50.0
8	Malpractices	5	41.7

The two most important challenges identified by all the academic staff are the non-availability of adequate resources and the large population of students. Poor education foundation of the students ranks high next to thee. The follow-up interview reveals that the level of the foundation of students at the higher institution is challenging and reveals unpreparedness for higher education. To buttress this, some academic staff believe that some students have a negative attitude to learning and all they are after is getting their grades by whatever means and having their certificates. Additionally, most students are reported not to have the ability to communicate fluently in the English language, which is the official language of instruction. This, in turn, increases the rate of examination malpractice and low level of understanding by students.

Table 6: Results of the challenges for students

S/N	Challenges to effective assessment practices	Frequency	Percentage
1	Close deadlines	72	85.7
2	Feedback and follow-up	82	97.6
3	Emphasis on examination	70	83.3
4	Reliability of grading	42	50.0

The categories of challenges encountered by the students are close deadlines for the courses, feedback, and follow-up on the feedback, too much emphasis on examinations, and reliability of the grading system. Students identified personal preferences, unclear assessment aims, and inconsistency as part of the feedback and follow-up challenge.

3.4 Summary

Based on the findings, there were no noteworthy variations in the perceptions of academic staff and students regarding some learning-oriented activities in their actual approach. Both groups concurred that learning outcomes were presented clearly, and they rarely used diagnostic, peer, and self-assessment, but always used summative assessment at the end of the course. On the other hand, there were significant discrepancies between faculty members and student perceptions on the following learning-oriented activities in their actual practices:

- The assessment was deemed useful and practical, and students reported that they gained knowledge and skills from it
- Students received feedback on their progress throughout the modules and were assessed using multiple assessment activities.

The responses of academic staff and students differed significantly when it comes to feedback. Academic staff rated feedback as "Often" and "Sometimes," while students rated it as "Sometimes" or "Never." The most significant variation was observed in the questions related to feedback that explains the assigned grade for assignments and feedback that is acted upon to enhance student learning. During interviews, academic staff and students confirmed the aforementioned results. The challenge of providing feedback to students is greater in large classes, which may limit the amount of feedback given. While this challenge cannot be ignored, it should not be an excuse. There is also a conflict between Outcomes-based Assessment (OBA) that emphasizes active student involvement to determine their competency/performance and the institutional requirement for grading. The most significant obstacles faced by students relate to concerns about reliability issues related to grading and marking, followed by feedback from faculty members.

4. Discussion, Recommendation, And Conclusion

4.1 Discussion of Main Findings

The aim is to analyze and interpret the perceptions of academic staff and students regarding assessment purposes and practices. This will involve identifying and examining the perspectives and difficulties of both groups while also ensuring that it is aligned with the research questions and assumptions presented at the outset of the investigation.

4.1.1 Academic Staff Perceptions of Purpose and Actual Assessment Practices

The study results indicated that faculty members and students shared the perception that the primary aim of the assessment was formative or progressive. However, the significance of the formative purpose of the assessment was not reflected in the actual assessment practices of academic staff. It was reported that academic staff that the assessment was either carried out at some point during the module or mainly towards the end of it. Additionally, staff reported that self- and peer-assessment, as well as feedback, were rare events within their assessment practices and that feedback given to students was hardly monitored or pursued with any action.

An important educational implication is that feedback that is not acted upon does not contribute to learning improvement. According to Carless (2003), feedback is a critical element of learning-oriented assessment, as it enables students to identify their current position, set goals for improvement, and determine how they can achieve them. Nonetheless, it should be noted that for feedback to be considered formative, it must be followed by actions taken by either the students or the academic staff to improve the learning experience. In other words, feedback should not be seen as merely evaluative, but rather as a means to facilitate learning and growth (Black, Harrison, & Lee, 2003). In essence, feedback is formative in purpose but not in function if it is not acted upon (Black & Wiliam, 2009). In addition to the individual factors affecting the views and practices of academic staff and students, the study also highlighted the role of broader contextual factors. For example, the academic staff reported that their assessment practices were

influenced or limited by various challenges such as negative attitudes, lack of resources, large class sizes, and lack of student skills. These challenges may hinder the translation of views into practice or create a gap between the intended and actual practice (Ocho, 2006). Thus, the study partially supports the initial assumption that although academic staff recognizes the importance of formative assessment, their actual practice tends to focus more on formal accountability.

4.1.2 Students' Perceptions of Assessment Purpose and Practice

In this section, the focus is on the perceptions of students regarding their assessment practices, as previously discussed. The principal findings revealed that students perceived their experiences of the objective of assessment approach as not contributing to their learning, which does not align with the standards model of assessment. Specifically, students reported that assessment activities were rarely done at the beginning or during the module but mostly at the end. They also felt that self- assessment and peer-assessment were infrequent. The student's perceptions of their experiences were similar to those of the academic staff regarding their assessment methods.

Certain faculty members tried to incorporate peer assessment through peer marking, but students found it challenging for effective assessment. According to Wheeler, Langan, and Dunleavy (2005), the success of peer assessment depends heavily on how the process is structured and managed. It is necessary to have a better understanding of the effects of inexperienced markers on assessment, the involvement of students in the development of marking criteria, and how it affects the final grade. On the other hand, Papinczak, Young, Groves, and Haynes (2007) introduced the development of student-involved criteria, but students still had negative perceptions of their peer-assessment experience. They suggested that it may take years of practice in peer assessment for students to feel comfortable with the process.

Academic staff and students had differing views regarding the purpose of their assessment practices, particularly in the areas of practical/useful assessment, multiple assessment activities, and feedback that is followed up with actions to improve learning. Students perceived reliability and lack of feedback as the biggest challenges for effective assessment, specifically in terms of understanding the mark given and the absence of feedback that academic staff followed up with action. To address these issues, James, McInnis, and Devlin (2002) suggest that clear communication of assessment criteria to students is crucial. The study results reveal that both academic staff and students view the objective of assessment as formative. However, there is a discrepancy in their perceptions when it comes to the actual assessment practice. While academic staff believes that their assessment practices are formative, students view them as more summative in nature. This was demonstrated earlier in the section through specific examples. Thus, the hypothesis that academic staff and students hold different views about the objective of their assessment approach is supported by the findings.

4.2 Recommendations

In the final part of the study, recommendations are provided for practice and policy with regard to assessment practices, taking into account the challenges faced by academic staff that may hinder the full realization of assessment practices based on the standards-based assessment model. Firstly, it is suggested that mechanisms or processes be established to support the implementation, promotion, evaluation and

monitoring of the policy at various levels, including the individual, department, faculty, and institution assessment practices. The impact of classes with a high number of students on effective assessment practices, which was highlighted in the major findings, should not be disregarded, and must be addressed. Additionally, further research should be conducted on how to implement standards model approach within the context of classes with a high number of students. Finally, it is recommended that changes to assessment practices should be considered at an institutional level to enable effective assessment reform and address the impact of classes with a high number of students on assessment practices.

4.3 Conclusion and Further Research and Development

To sum up, the standards assessment model is seen as a positive approach to formal education, especially in Higher Education, as it aims to assess learning based on specific criteria (Biggs, 2003). Nonetheless, this study revealed that while academic staff expressed their dedication to formative assessment, students believed that their practices did not align with the standards model of assessment. Therefore, based on the study's results, it is recommended to conduct further research into assessment practices in large class sizes, with a particular emphasis on the following aspects.

- Implementing a standards-based assessment method in the context of large classes;
- Optimal utilization of self-evaluation and peer evaluation in extensive classroom settings; and
- Enhancing student learning through the utilization of feedback.

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