

**CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND STUDENTS'
RETENTION RATE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: IMPLICATIONS
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY**

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the classroom assessment practices commonly adopted by Lecturers in some Nigerian Universities and how students' retention rate is affected vis-à-vis national security. The paper adopted survey design as a method of data collection. Simple random sampling procedure was used for selecting sampled Universities for the study and descriptive procedures were used in analysing collected data. The paper identified classroom assessment practices commonly used by University Lecturers to include formative and summative assessments, individual, group and ipsative assessments as well as referencing assessments. Issue of zero score in assessment was found to be largely responsible for poor retention rate and high drop-out rate among University students with the resultant effect on increasing level of societal crimes and threat to national security. The paper therefore, concludes that since national security implies the preservation of the nation's physical integrity and territory including its nature, institutions and governance, as a matter of policy, necessary steps should be taken to ameliorate the aspect(s) of classroom assessment practices that expel students from the universities and constitute threats to national security. The paper recommends that there should not be zero in

classroom assessment in line with the doctrine of comprehensiveness in assessment. Again, students should be exposed to a variety of assessment activities that give meaning to formative evaluation including the use of creative assessment, classroom observation, peer assessment, and self-assessment

Keywords: Assessment Practices, Formative and Summative Assessments, National Security, Individual, Group and Ipsative Assessments, Referencing Assessments, Students' Retention Rate

Introduction

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) termed Education in Nigeria as an instrument "par excellence" for national development. Again, it is an acclaimed statement that education is the most potent instrument for development and for mental and social emancipation (Anikweze, 2012). In line with this, the second American President Thomas Jefferson asserted that 'any nation that needs development and reject education is a nation that needs what has never been and what will never be'.

University education is the apex level of education system. It is a very crucial level of the education because it is a stage which prepares students for high-level skilled works in various fields. In realization of the critical role the university education has to play in the all round development of the country, the Federal Republic of Nigeria in its National Policy on Education stipulated that some of the goals of university education among others shall be to make optimum contribution to national development by:

- a. intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation; and
- b. making professional course contents to reflect our national requirements...(FRN: 2004).

It is expected that university education should inspire and equip students with the desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence and relevant skills that will help them make maximum contribution to all facets of economy of the nation.

Teaching is one of the noble professions one can think about. However, teaching is said to be tedious because it deals with the modification of learners' behavior. The teacher in the process of discharging his/her responsibility needs to find out whether or not teaching goals are achieved and to what extent. Therefore the teacher makes use of the three dovetail interrelated concepts of test, measurement and evaluation

(Anikweze, 2012). The history of testing dates back to the ancient Spartans, when the youths were tested for physical prowess before initiation into manhood. Socrates the Greek philosopher refined testing among the Athenians to become richly intellectual in content through the famous type of teaching approach known as Socratic method. A test is a tool for evaluation after it has been measured. It should be noted that without effective evaluation, accountability is unthinkable.

An assessment is generally conceptualized as the process of investigating the status or standard of the target of consideration with reference to certain expectations which are in most cases expressed as objectives (Anikweze, 2012). In most educational institutions, assessment implies the process of using the results obtained from measurements to take relevant decisions about the programme being assessed (Reeves, 2010). Thus, educational assessment involves the process of documentation, usually in measurable terms, of knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs manifested by individuals who are passing through the system of education. Accordingly, educators in Nigeria generally understand assessment in education to occur whenever one person, in some kind of interaction, direct or indirect with another, is conscious of obtaining and interpreting information about the knowledge and understanding, or abilities and attitudes of that other person (Rolheiser & Ross, 2000).

The Nigerian society is getting more and more insecure, more people are getting into crimes and they are getting more ruthless, desperate and sophisticated. In Nigeria, especially since the advent of the present democratic dispensation, new forms of violent crimes have become common; these include kidnapping for ransom, pipeline vandalization, Boko Haram bombings, rape, political violence and more. According to the UNESCO (2012) human security may be defined to include such chronic threats as hunger disease and repression. Security means protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life in homes, offices or communities. Essentially, security must be related to the presence of peace, safety, happiness and the protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis, threats to human injury among others. The presence of peace could facilitate progress. This work examines National Security and Development in Nigeria. Insecurity is not a discrete or measurable variable in quantitative terms but some of its determinants could be ascertained. The educational institutions have a role in crime reduction by ensuring students enroll and remain in school for productive training. However, when the retention rate of students is reduced by factors like teachers' assessment practices and unhealthy monitoring of students' academic progress the resultant effects are likely to be drop-out and increased crime in the society. Therefore, it is against this background that this paper examines the classroom assessment practices

and students' retention rate in Nigerian universities and the implications for national security.

Purpose of the Study

The broad objective of this paper is to examine classroom assessment practices and students' retention rate in Nigerian universities: implications for national security. Specifically, the paper aimed to:

1. Examine the assessment practices adopted by Lecturers in Nigeria Universities.
2. Ascertain the issues in the assessment practices adopted by Lecturers that affects students' retention rate in Nigeria Universities.
3. Determine how students' retention rate in Nigerian Universities relates to National security.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

1. What are the assessment practices adopted by Lecturers in Nigeria Universities?
2. What are the issues in the assessment practices adopted by Lecturers that affects students' retention rate in Nigeria Universities?
3. How does students' retention rate in Nigerian Universities relates to National security?

Literature Review

Types of Assessment Practices for Evaluating Learner Competence

Barret (2011) used the term **assessment** to refer generally to different kinds of activities that teachers/educators adopt to help students or trainees learn. The educators also use different types of assessment to evaluate what their students have learned depending on the purposes and the approaches to assessment. The categories of assessment that can be distinguished (although not all are fully implemented in Nigeria) are initial, formative and summative assessments, objective and subjective assessments, referencing (criterion-referenced, norm-referenced, *Ipsative*) assessments, formal and informal assessments, internal and external assessments. To these may be added On-line assessments.

Initial, Formative and Summative Assessments: The major distinctions between initial, formative and summative categories of assessment lay in the purpose of assessment practices. Initial assessment is pre-assessment or diagnostic assessment conducted prior to commencement of instruction to establish the entering behaviour

of the student. Formative assessment is the *assessment for learning* generally carried out throughout a course or project. Nwana (2007) posited that "formative assessment encompasses any activities undertaken by teachers or students that provide feedback that will be used to modify teaching and learning activities" (p. 9). It is often referred to as continuous assessment or educative assessment. It is used for obtaining continuous feedback to both the teacher and the learners for the purpose of determining the progress of learning during a course of instruction and for improving learners' performance through remediation. Furniss (2000) preferred the term *Developmental assessment* which is the process of monitoring a student's progress through an area of learning so that decisions can be made about the best ways to support further learning. Bell and Cowie (2001:82) defined formative assessment as "the process used by teachers and students to recognize and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning, during the learning." These rich definitions state vividly the process and the players, but do not describe the challenges and difficulties of implementing the process especially when school authorities and ministry officials are emphasizing coverage of the syllabus.

The major flaw that has been identified with the implementation of continuous assessment in Nigeria is that teachers over-emphasize the cognitive domain to the neglect of affective and psychomotor domains thereby diminishing the comprehensive quality of continuous assessment. Research findings (Ma & Millman, 2005; Anikweze, 2008; Amuche, 2010) suggest that teachers do not give credence to the assessment of the affective and psychomotor domains of educational objectives either because of ignorance about the assessment instruments for measuring them or due to pressures from examination demands for students' success. Susuwele-Banda (2005) investigated primary school teachers' perceptions and practices in Mathematics assessment in Malawi and found out that teachers perceive classroom assessment as periodic tests and showed limited ability to use different methods and tools to assess their students' developments in the affective and psychomotor domains. The investigator concluded that teacher education program had not adequately contributed to teachers' perceptions about comprehensive classroom assessment. The situation is not different in Nigeria because many teachers lack assessment literacy, that is, the kind of assessment know-how and skills related to the basic principles of effective assessment practices that teachers need to assess their students effectively (William, 2009).

Summative assessment, on the other hand, is the *assessment of learning* that is generally carried out at the end of a course or project for decision making as it affects promotion, selection, and grouping of students, curriculum planning and evaluation, certification of students, hiring or firing of teachers, maintenance of school

standards, comparing students and schools and for reporting how learners have progressed to parents, learners themselves and educational administrators. Stake (2004) explained the difference between formative and summative assessment with the following analogy: 'When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; When the guests taste the soup, that's summative.' Thus, when teachers test their students, that's formative; when examination bodies assess the students, that's summative. *Diagnostic assessment* and *Self-assessment* are forms of formative assessment while *Performance-based assessment* is a form of summative assessment since it focuses on achievement.

Criterion-referenced, Norm-referenced, and Ipsative Assessment: These terms provide bases for the comparison of learners' performance in assessment activities. *Criterion-referenced assessment* uses a criterion-referenced test to measure students' performance against defined 'standard' criteria. In the case of *Norm-referenced assessment*, a norm-referenced test is used to measure each student's performance against group performance. The IQ test is the best known example of norm-referenced assessment. The bell-shaped curve (normal curve) is often used to determine the grades of the assessed candidates. *Ipsative assessment* is the practice of assessing present performance against the prior performance of the person being assessed. It is self comparison either in the same domain over time, or comparative to other domains within the same student. This form of assessment is an innovation yet to be practiced in Nigeria. It is essentially for self motivation of the student and the obtained scores should not be part of CA cumulative record (Adetoyo, 2008).

Assessment of Nigerian education based on current assessment practices

Purposes of classroom, national and international assessments prompt the question: who wants to know and why? As rightly observed by Furniss (2000), so many stakeholders in education are interested to know the outcomes of learning. The question of concern may be different for each type of stakeholder. For instance, while teachers want to know what students are learning, and schools want to know if teachers are doing a good job, students would want to know if they are learning, and if so, how well. Assessment feedback for students should ensure that students know what they can do, and what they cannot, followed by how to correct their mistakes. Parents/guardians and the society want to know if students are achieving the objectives of being in school and how useful the school is as a contribution to community life. Education managers and policy makers want to know if student learning is consistent with curriculum standards; if schooling is efficient and whether students are well prepared for the challenges of life. International agencies provide a

larger context within which to interpret national results. Figure 1 gives a graphic illustration of social demand on assessment results.

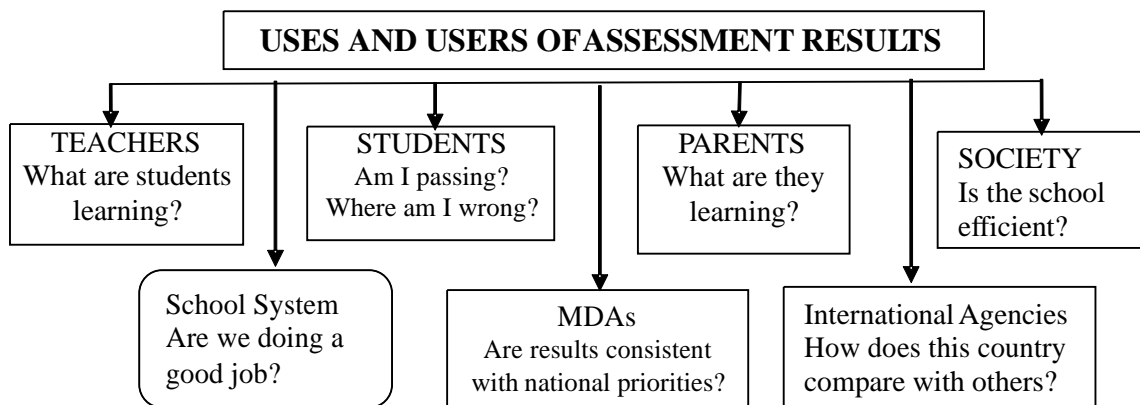


Figure 1: A Conceptual Model of the Scope of Interest in Assessment Results

Relying on these assumptions, and considering the quality of the outputs from tertiary education as depicted by their level of performance in jobs and in character manifestations, one may be tempted to conclude that the assessments that eventuated to their being found '*worthy in learning and character*' leave much to be desired. Stakeholders have complained about poor communication skill exhibited by fresh university graduates. They have also adversely criticized the lack of requisite practical skills to qualify the graduates to be of utility value to employers. At the social level, the Nigerian youths have become products of infamy judging by the rascality with which they pursue millionaire status through reckless adoption of kidnapping and armed robbery. Apparently, paper-and-pencil assessments may have helped the contemporary school graduates to acquire certificates but humanistic and character education may have eluded them.

Need for Innovative Assessment Practices

The traditional methods of assessing students' learning and mastery of particular subjects such as geography, history, government, chemistry, biology, and mathematics generally involve assembling a series of teacher-made tests with items or questions relating to the subject matter taught and requiring the student to recollect content knowledge in answer to the questions (Adomi & Kpangban, 2010). Depending on the subject, candidates may be required to provide an explanation or to perform calculations. In the main, such tests are either of a subjective essay type sometimes with choice options, or are of an objective

structured response type, requiring the students to select an answer from a limited number of choice options. These traditional methods of assessment do not readily measure, in a consistent manner, the students' reasoning and creativity, nor does the assessment go beyond mere regurgitation of the immediately learned materials. Application of acquired knowledge to new factual situations is a rarity. Perhaps, with the exception of promotional tests or certificate examinations, the traditional tests are usually not considered as challenging by students.

One other unfortunate implication of the traditional assessment practices is over-concentration of efforts on cognitive knowledge and perhaps few of psycho-motor skills to the utter neglect of values and other affective details that lead to the education of the total person. The effect on the outputs of education has accentuated rather than stemmed the tide of the persistent problems of the Nigerian society such as inequity, injustice, poverty, unemployment, hunger and disease, violence, bloodshed and terrorism, pollution and degradation of the environment. Therefore, there is a need for innovative approaches for assessing the working knowledge level of students in the subjects they have learned employing readily measurable criteria in a way that retains the students' interest and ensures the objectivity as much as possible of the teacher's evaluation of the student responses (Kennedy, 2001).

Innovative assessment for the 21st Century according to Rossett and Sheldon (2001) asks practitioners to rethink the way assessment is conducted and competencies are defined, particularly placing the assessment process in the context of lifelong learning across the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Ordinarily, innovative assessment could be any form of assessment which involves the application of a new technique or method. But as argued by Aduwa and Iyamu (2004) innovative assessment should be considered in terms of its characteristics and its mission. It encompasses a whole range of different techniques and methods, not all of which are new inventions but with a new thrust to improve the quality of student learning.

Assessment is innovative when it becomes not just something which is 'done to' learners but also 'done with' and 'done by' learners (Duek, 2008). The emphasis shifts from assessment associated with the end-product of the learning process to formative evaluation of learners' range of skills during the learning process. Doubtless, innovative assessment strategies can facilitate learning on several levels. Thus, by developing innovative assessment strategies, teachers can simulate real life situations that combine all three domains while developing critical thinking skills and building confidence. It therefore becomes a challenge for Nigerian teachers of

the 21st Century to evolve alternative evaluation tools that can, not only alleviate test anxiety and performance anxiety which are instrumental to reliance on examination malpractice, but also produce graduates that are self reliant, productive and worthy citizens. Teacher education in Nigeria faces the challenge of producing teachers that possess assessment literacy and are conversant with creative assessments.

Assessment Principles

A relevant aspect of assessment practices is the observance of pertinent principles which are basic to realizing the full benefits of the various assessment procedures. According to Anikweze (2011) the following principles specify the basis for embarking on assessment, the types of assessment and the procedures for obtaining valid and authentic assessment results.

1. Assessment tasks should be aligned with the objectives of instruction and the content of the learning arrangements.
2. The design of assessment tasks should provide students with the stimulus to study in depth.
3. Students should be made aware of assessment requirements including assessment points, pass marks, grading system and assessment hurdles.
4. Assessment tasks should be diversified to cater for individual and group diversity.
5. Good assessment uses multiple methods to obtain evidence of student capability for both formative and summative purposes.
6. Good assessment is based on clear and articulate expression of objectives, requirements, standards and criteria.
7. Assessment methods should be valid, authentic and reliable.
8. Marking is a key element of the assessment process underpinning the maintenance of academic standards. It should therefore be carried out with honesty, objectivity and within the context of grade descriptors and assessment criteria made clear to the students (Yoloye, 2009).
9. Good assessment practices provide students with timely feedback which could be verbal or written comments, individually and in groups; model answers to questions, and through emails or online comments.

Different Assessment Techniques

According to Nikol, Owen, Robert and Draper (2009) the following assessment procedures could be adopted to obtain evidence of student learning:

1. *Closed Book Assessment Technique in the form of final examination that lasts for more than one hour during which students are required to answer a number of questions that are not known in advance*

2. *Continuous Assessment involving periodic assessments of the learners' attainments in the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domains and are expected to be systematic, objective, comprehensive, cumulative and guidance-oriented*
3. *Practical work* which involves students in practically demonstrating their knowledge and skills in performing tasks in the laboratory, workshop, studio or field
4. *Open-Time (Take Home) Assessment Technique in which tasks and projects are assigned to students to accomplish at their own time and submit by a specified date thereby assessing students' ability to find and utilize references.*
5. *Open Book Assessment Technique in which students are permitted to make references to their textbooks and notebooks during the examination thereby enabling assessments to measure application and evaluation of information as well as the skill in locating relevant material to use in answering questions (Schrader, 2007).*
6. *Pre-published Assessment Technique in which some or all of the questions for the final examination are 'published' by giving them out to students as revision questions weeks before the examination dates (Savin-Baden, 2000).*
7. *Oral Assessment Technique which involves face-to-face type of assessment in a sort of interview operational mode and best applicable for testing fluency in language education and usually adopted in thesis defence for higher degrees.*
8. *Group Work Assessment Procedure which is adopted as a strategy for coping with large classes. When properly organized, it ensures cohesiveness, enhances peer learning, enables students to understand concepts through discussion among peers, and at the same time, facilitates development of team dynamics and leadership qualities.*
9. *Computer Based Assessment Technique which involves the use of computers for administering tests, collecting and scoring answers and producing instant results.*
10. *On-line Assessment Procedure which relies on internet services. It is done for diversity and to broaden students' range of skills and in some cases, to meet students' special expectations (Nworgu, 2010).*

Methodology

The study used descriptive survey research design as a plan for data collection. The design is considered suitable because the population is large and a representative of the population is selected for study. *The population of consists of all University*

lecturers in there Universities in Nigeria (Nasarawa State University, Keffi; Ibrahim Badamasi Babagida University, Lapai and Kaduna State University, Kaduna). A sample 300 Lecturers were selected for the study using simple random sampling technique which gave the Lecturers equal opportunity of being selected thereby reducing the bias effect that could interfere with the validity and reliability of the study. A structured questionnaire called 'Questionnaire for University Lecturers' Assessment Practices' (QULAP) was used for data collection and a Proforma for collecting Students' Enrolment and Completion Rates (PECR). The instruments were validated through experts' appraisal and checking of the appropriateness of the items. The reliabilities of the instruments were established through the process of pilot study. Cronbach Alpha method is estimating the reliability index was used and the instruments yielded 0.78 and 0.80 as indices of internal consistency for QULAP and PECR respectively. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (absolute and relative frequencies).

Results

Research Question 1: What are the assessment practices adopted by Lecturers in

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Assessment for learning (formative/continuous assessment)	196 (65%)	79 (26%)	19 (6%)	6 (3%)	300 (100%)
2	Assessment of learning (summative assessment)	109 (36%)	130 (43%)	36 (12%)	25 (9%)	300 (100%)
3	Measuring students' performance against defined standard (criterion-referenced assessment)	208 (69%)	83 (28%)	5 (2%)	4 (1%)	300 (100%)
4	Measuring students' performance against group performance (norm-referenced assessment)	29 (10%)	30 (10%)	156 (52%)	85 (28%)	300 (100%)
5	Assessing present performance of students against the prior performance (Ipsative assessment)	60 (20%)	30 (10%)	110 (37%)	100 (33%)	300 (100%)
6	Individual assessment	59 (20%)	82 (27%)	80 (27%)	79 (26%)	300 (100%)
7	Group assessment	60 (20%)	110 (37%)	80 (27%)	50 (16%)	300 (100%)

Nigeria Universities?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Assessment Practices Adopted by Lecturers in Nigeria Universities

Table 1 shows the **descriptive statistics for assessment practices adopted by Lecturers in Nigeria Universities**. It is evident that an overwhelming majority of the Lecturers represented by 91% of the entire respondents make use of assessment for learning (formative/continuous assessment). Again, 79%, 97%, 20%, 30%, 47% and 57% of the entire Lecturers adopt assessment of learning (summative assessment), measuring students' performance against defined standard (criterion-referenced assessment), measuring students' performance against group performance (norm-referenced assessment), assessing present performance of students against the prior performance (Ipsative assessment), individual assessment and group assessment respectively. Therefore, from the above analysis, the assessment practices commonly used by Lecturers in Nigerian Universities in order of frequencies are:

- a. Measuring students' performance against defined standard (criterion-referenced assessment)
- b. Assessment for learning (formative/continuous assessment)
- c. Assessment of learning (summative assessment)
- d. Group assessment
- e. Individual assessment
- f. Assessing present performance of students against the prior performance (Ipsative assessment)
- g. Measuring students' performance against group performance (norm-referenced assessment)

Research Question 2: What are the issues in the assessment practices adopted by Lecturers that affects students' retention rate in Nigeria Universities?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for issues in the Assessment Practices adopted by Lecturers that Affects Students' Retention Rate in Nigeria

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Issue of zero score	208 (69%)	83 (28%)	5 (2%)	4 (1%)	300 (100%)
2	Lack comparability of assessment	100 (33%)	130 (43%)	36 (12%)	34 (12%)	300 (100%)
3	Lack comprehensibility of Assessment	204 (68%)	83 (28%)	6 (2%)	7 (2%)	300 (100%)
4	Lack of uniformity in assessment practices	156 (52%)	85 (28%)	29 (10%)	30 (10%)	300 (100%)
5	Prevalence of penalty error than generosity error	110 (37%)	100 (33%)	60 (20%)	30 (10%)	300 (100%)
6	Adoption of analytical marking style than global marking style	59 (20%)	82 (27%)	80 (27%)	79 (26%)	300 (100%)
7	Use of close book assessment technique	60 (20%)	110 (37%)	80 (27%)	50 (16%)	300 (100%)
8	Lack of pre-published assessment technique	208 (69%)	83 (28%)	5 (2%)	4 (1%)	300 (100%)
9	The use of computer based assessment technique	196 (65%)	79 (26%)	19 (6%)	6 (3%)	300 (100%)

Universities

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for issues in the assessment practices adopted by Lecturers that affects students' retention rate in Nigeria Universities. It is obvious that a vast majority of the Lecturers represented by 97% of the entire Lecturers were of the opinion that the Issue of zero score affects students' retention rate in Nigeria Universities. Again, 77% 96% 80% 70% 47% 57% 97% and 91% of the entire Lecturers were of the opinion that Lack comparability of assessment, Lack comprehensibility of Assessment, Lack of uniformity in assessment practices, Prevalence of penalty error than generosity error, Adoption of analytical marking style than global marking style, Use of close book assessment technique, Lack of pre-published assessment technique and The use of computer based assessment technique respectively affect students' retention rate in Nigeria Universities. Therefore, from the above analysis, the issues in the assessment practices adopted by Lecturers that affects students' retention rate in Nigeria Universities in order of frequencies are as follows:

- Issue of zero score
- Lack of pre-published assessment technique
- Lack comprehensibility of Assessment
- The use of computer based assessment technique

- e. Lack of uniformity in assessment practices
- f. Lack comparability of assessment
- g. Prevalence of penalty error than generosity error
- h. Use of close book assessment technique
- i. Adoption of analytical marking style than global marking style

Research Question 3: How does students' retention rate in Nigerian Universities relates to National security?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Students' Retention Rate in Nigerian Universities and National Security

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Students during school sessions are less involve in violent crisis that could threaten national security.	204 (68%)	83 (28%)	6 (2%)	7 (2%)	300 (100%)
2	Low retention rate of students implies an increase in drop-out rate and a threat to national security.	156 (52%)	85 (28%)	29 (10%)	30 (10%)	300 (100%)
3	Drop-out students mostly get frustrated and could constitute a danger to national security.	110 (37%)	100 (33%)	60 (20%)	30 (10%)	300 (100%)

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics on how does students' retention rate in Nigerian Universities relates to National security. It is obvious that a vast majority of the Lecturers represented by 96% of the entire Lecturers were of the opinion that the students during school sessions are less involve in violent crisis that could threaten national security. Again, 80% and 70% of the entire Lecturers were of the opinion that low retention rate of students implies an increase in drop-out rate and a threat to national security and drop-out students mostly get frustrated and could constitute a danger to national security respectively. Therefore students' retention rate in Nigerian Universities relates to National security.

Conclusion

In Nigeria educationists may know the numerous characteristics and qualities that make for quality graduates and really expect students under professional tutelage to manifest those characteristics. *However*, the issues that call for scrutiny relate to the assessment modes and practices by which teachers arrive at the qualifications credited to the graduates. In conclusion therefore, the research found that the

assessment practices commonly used by Lecturers in Nigerian Universities include: Measuring students' performance against defined standard (criterion-referenced assessment), Assessment for learning (formative/continuous assessment, Assessment of learning (summative assessment), Group assessment, Individual assessment, Assessing present performance of students against the prior performance (Ipsative assessment) and Measuring students' performance against group performance (norm-referenced assessment). Again, issues in the assessment practices adopted by Lecturers that affects students' retention rate in Nigeria Universities are: Issue of zero score, Lack of pre-published assessment technique, Lack comprehensibility of Assessment, The use of computer based assessment technique, Lack of uniformity in assessment practices, Lack comparability of assessment, Prevalence of penalty error than generosity error, Use of close book assessment technique and Adoption of analytical marking style than global marking style.

Recommendations

1. For improved assessment practices, university management should insist on a comprehensive assessment (considering zero as non score in assessment) system based on a coordinated plan for periodically monitoring the progress of students in a variety of subjects using a variety of assessment procedures.
2. Individual assessment should be utilized by Lecturers for assessing individual creativity and learning progress while simultaneously improving the student's motivation to accept a greater degree of responsibility for his/her learning progress.
3. Group work assessment procedure should be utilized as a useful strategy for coping with large classes since when properly organized, it has the advantages of ensuring cohesiveness among students besides enhancing peer learning and facilitating the development of team dynamics and leadership qualities as well as improve students' retention rate.
4. As technology advances, Lecturers should strive to become more proficient in the use of computer-based testing and reporting of results. In this regard, all Universities should be adequately equipped with computers so that CBT could become a formalized assessment practice to ensure students' retention rate.
5. Lecturers should give adequate information to students before any assessment. They should be made aware of assessment requirements including assessment points, pass marks, grading system and assessment hurdles.
6. Students should be exposed to a variety of assessment activities that give meaning to 'comprehensive' formative evaluation including the use of creative (performance) assessment, classroom observation, peer

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