



Comparative analysis of educational assessment frameworks among higher institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated a comparative analysis of educational assessment frameworks among higher institutions in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, which consists of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. The study adopts a Comparative Cross-Sectional Design. The research population is deans of faculties and schools, heads of departments and students of the higher institutions in the Geopolitical Zone. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select 20 deans, 80 heads of departments, and 600 students. The researcher studied how higher institutions in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria utilize summative, formative and diagnostic assessments to evaluate students' performance and how they align with national and international standards and best practices. It also investigates how Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains is applied in the various higher institutions. The instruments used for the study are questionnaires and interview techniques. The validity of the instrument was established using expert judgement, while the reliability was established using the test-retest method with a reliability coefficient of 0.75.

The instruments were administered to the respondents, and analysis of the data revealed that higher institutions rely heavily on summative evaluation, but there is limited use of formative and diagnostic evaluations, which leads to gaps in continuous feedback and student development. The study also identified significant challenges. Additionally, it was noted that higher institutions have adopted Bloom's Taxonomy, but with little emphasis on the affective domain. Conclusions were drawn, and recommendations were made.

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1. Introduction

An educational assessment framework is a programmed and systematic method or approach used to evaluate different dimensions of educational processes, which include student learning, methods of assessment, instructional effectiveness, and institutional performance. These frameworks provide or identify the various methodologies, tools, and criteria for assessing educational outcomes and enhancing the quality of educational delivery. They help in designing, implementing, and analysing assessments to improve instructional practices and educational outcomes.

Educational assessment frameworks are important in assessing and evaluating quality education in higher institutions. These frameworks ensure structured methodologies for evaluating students' learning outcomes, pedagogical effectiveness, and institutional performance. The effi-

cacy of these frameworks varies significantly across various regions and institutions, which impact local educational policies, cultural contexts, and institutional goals. Analysis of these frameworks in higher institutions in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria is important in identifying the best methods that will enhance and improve educational assessment and the best practices to be adopted among the higher institutions. This study is designed to perform a comparative analysis of educational assessment frameworks in the higher institutions of study in the South-South Geopolitical Zone to know their effectiveness and impact on academic outcomes.

Educational assessment frameworks entail a range of tools and strategies designed to assess and evaluate different aspects of educational processes, including student learning, methods of evaluation, effectiveness of instructional materials, types of evaluation instruments and

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techniques used. The frameworks include formative assessments (ongoing assessments during the learning process), summative assessments (evaluations at the end of the semester or session), and diagnostic assessments (identification of learning difficulties and needs). The design and implementation of these frameworks have a significant effect on the quality of education and student performance (Black & Wiliam, 2020; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The South-South zone is one of the six Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria; it has both public and private higher institutions, which include universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. These institutions play important roles in the region's educational landscape and contribute to the socio-economic development of the zone, Nigeria and the world. However, there is a noticeable difference in the assessment frameworks adopted by these institutions, which may affect the consistency and quality of education provided (Uzochukwu et al., 2023).

Comparative analysis of educational assessment frameworks plays an important role in identifying strengths and weaknesses in higher institutions' different methods. By examining the different frameworks adopted by the various higher institutions in the zone, this study aims to highlight best practices and areas that need improvement. These analyses can provide valuable insights into how assessment practices can affect student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Furthermore, it can inform policy recommendations and contribute to developing more effective assessment strategies (Guskey & Jung, 2022; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2024).

Educational assessment frameworks are an integral part of assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes in educational sectors. The frameworks provide the best methods and techniques for assessing student performance, quality of instructional materials and effectiveness in the state higher institutions. The zone has different higher institutions, including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. The different institutions employ various assessment frameworks, reflecting diverse educational priorities and methodologies. These variations present several challenges, warranting research on a comprehensive comparative analysis.

This research was also conducted to address insufficient comparative analysis, inconsistency in assessment practices, lack of a standardized approach to assessment, challenges in benchmarking and standardization, and the need for a best practices approach to the educational assessment frameworks used by the different higher institutions.

Despite increased attention paid to educational assessment practices in higher institutions, there still exist various gaps that need attention in higher institutions in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

The first is underutilization of formative and diagnostic assessment methods. This study highlights that while summative assessment is widely used, formative and diagnostic assessments are neglected. This poses a gap in exploiting continuous feedback to enhance teaching and

learning processes and student overall development. The limited usage of these forms of evaluation neglects the relevance of feedback and remedies regarding difficulties that need to be addressed with empirical evidence.

The second is the absence of standardization of educational assessment frameworks across higher institutions in Nigeria, including the South-South zone, leading to inconsistent student evaluation practices. This inconsistency has implications for comparability of student learning outcomes that lead to difficulties in generalizing academic performance in higher institutions.

Third is the neglect of the affective domain in Bloom's Taxonomy. Analysis of Bloom's Taxonomy revealed an over-dependence on the cognitive and psychomotor domains and neglect of the affective domain that includes attitudes, values and emotional development. This gap affects the holistic development of our graduates and hence they lack empathy, ethical reasoning and interpersonal skills. This gap calls for empirical attention.

Fourth, there is also inconsistency in implementation of continuous assessment in our higher institutions. Though continuous assessment in our higher institutions is generally adopted, its application differs within and across higher institutions in the zone. This inconsistency emanated from inadequate policy enforcement, differences in departmental and faculty practices, and lack of clarity and uniformity in implementation guidelines.

Lastly, there is insufficient capacity building for evaluators and educators. In addition, there is inadequate training on modern and technological training in contemporary assessment methods such as competency-based assessment, portfolio based and performance-based assessment. These gaps require immediate attention and the adoption of assessment frameworks that meet the demands of 21st-century education. This study identified a multi-faceted gap in the area of design, implementation and effectiveness of educational assessment framework across the higher institutions. Addressing these gaps will enhance and promote effective assessment frameworks in higher institutions.

The main objective of this research is to perform a comparative analysis of the various summative, formative and diagnostic assessment frameworks in the higher institutions in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria and their application of Bloom's Taxonomy in assessment. The specific objectives include the following:

1. To investigate the extent of the application of summative, formative and diagnostic evaluation in the higher institutions.
2. To investigate evaluation tools or devices used by the higher institutions.
3. To investigate the extent to which the higher institutions apply Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains in assessment.

4. To identify the challenges higher institutions encounter in implementing and sustaining effective assessment frameworks in the zone.
5. To propose solutions on how to resolve challenges facing the assessment framework in the higher institutions.

This comparative analysis of educational assessment frameworks among higher institutions in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria is therefore timely and important.

2. Literature review

2.1. Global best practice and quality assurance for formative, diagnostic, and summative evaluation in higher institutions

International best practices in higher education emphasize quality assurance systems that will include diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluation to ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. Kayyali (2024) showed that assessment frameworks should be designed in line with international best practices and national accreditation bodies' recommendations. Recent research highlighted that effective evaluation systems should include summative, formative and diagnostic evaluation; hence, assessment should relate to teaching and learning to improve institutional effectiveness and comparability across global contexts (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education [ENQA], 2020).

Recent studies have shown that diagnostic evaluation has gained recognition as a foundational element of quality assurance, which will address learner diversity and preparedness in higher institutions. It will provide the teacher with prior knowledge and competencies of students before teaching, as indicated by Chufama and Sithole (2023), with an early opportunity for identification of learning gaps and inform instructional planning on how to address such problems. Global best practices affirm that when diagnostic assessment data are systematically reviewed within quality assurance frameworks, institutions can design targeted interventions that will address and enhance academic success (OECD, 2021). Therefore, diagnostic evaluation contributes to institutional quality by enhancing equity, inclusiveness, and curriculum responsiveness.

Formative evaluation is widely regarded as the foundation of quality teaching and learning in the educational system. Various studies have consistently shown that continuous feedback mechanisms, peer assessment, and reflective learning activities enhance student engagement and achievement, which is in line with BMC Medical Education (2024) in that formative evaluation will enhance the quality of teaching and learning, instructional improvement and students' achievement. SAGE Journals (2025) also highlighted that formative evaluation provides real-time evidence of teaching effectiveness and learning progress,

which enables timely pedagogical adjustments. The integration of digital tools and learning analytics into formative assessment further represents a global best practice, strengthening feedback quality and institutional monitoring of learning outcomes.

Summative evaluation is used for certification, grading, and external accountability within quality assurance systems. Best practices emphasize the validity, reliability, and transparency of summative assessments, ensuring alignment with intended learning outcomes and program objectives (ENQA, 2020). Recent studies emphasized the importance of balancing summative evaluation with diagnostic and formative approaches to avoid over-reliance on high-stakes testing (OECD, 2021). Kayyali (2024) opined that a coherent assessment framework that integrates all three evaluation types is therefore considered a hallmark of effective quality assurance in higher education, supporting both student development and institutional credibility.

2.2. How higher institutions can combine evaluation tools such as assignments, tests, practical work and examinations in line with international best practices and quality assurance

International best practices across different countries require the combination of different evaluation tools, such as assignments, tests, practical work, and examinations, that provide opportunities for comprehensive and quality-assured assessment systems in higher education that support student learning, which promotes validity and reliability (Zou et al., 2024). Assignments and practical work promote the psychomotor domain, which is essential for authentic assessment that allows students to demonstrate the application of knowledge, problem-solving, and practical competencies that traditional testing may not examine (Zou et al., 2024). While tests and examinations provide systematic measurement of the cognitive domain and mastery of core subject content that promote all-around academic standards, combining these tools reduces over-reliance on single-tool evaluation methods (Springer, 2024). Kayyali (2024) also noted that the use of assessment data from comprehensive evaluation tools will help to promote institutional accountability and international best practices.

2.3. Global best practice and quality assurance on best practices using Bloom's Taxonomy components of cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domains in higher institutions

For higher institutions to adopt uniform assessment Bloom's Taxonomy components, there is need to combine the three components of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains to enhance progressive learning from knowledge acquisition to higher-order thinking skills, such

as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. Anderson and Krathwohl (2020) and Taherdoost (2022) explored how combining curriculum objectives with teaching strategies, and assessments with cognitive-domain levels will improve transparency, consistency, and accountability in quality assurance processes. International accreditation bodies highlight the need for constructive alignment, where learning outcomes are clearly in line with Bloom's cognitive levels, that encourages assessment of student competence and institutional effectiveness (Biggs & Tang, 2021; OECD, 2023). Pangga et al. (2024) also showed that apart from cognition, best practices in higher education system require integration of affective and psychomotor domains to produce graduates that are well-grounded in all areas of life. The affective domain supports the development of professional values, ethical reasoning, motivation, and lifelong learning attitudes, which are increasingly prioritized in global graduate attribute frameworks (Potgieter et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2021). While Scully (2021) noted that the psychomotor domain is important for practical activities, and performance-based assessments. These reviews have identified that higher institutions should combine the three Bloom's Taxonomy components that will support international benchmarks and accreditation standards. These holistic integrations ensure that learning outcomes are measurable, transferable, and responsive to global educational and workforce demands.

2.4. Role of feedback in higher institution assessment framework

In the educational system, feedback to students is an essential component in the teaching and learning process. It serves as a bridge between learning and evaluation in the teaching and learning process. Research studies have shown that the timely return of test scripts to students provides them with relevant information about their performance and identifies areas of their strength and weakness. Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Deeley et al. (2020) determined that corrective measures help to improve students' achievement and performance. When feedback is delayed or inaccessible to students, its formative value becomes meaningless, reducing opportunities for academic improvement before subsequent assessments (Winstone & Carless, 2020). International best practices, therefore, stress the importance of returning marked scripts and providing explanatory comments as part of quality assurance mechanisms that promote transparency, fairness, and accountability in assessment processes (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023). These practices are in line with formative assessment principles, which advocate that continuous feedback to students will support improvement in their learning rather than merely certifying performance.

Similarly, the showing of continuous assessment (CA) scores before examinations and the release of sessional results before the following academic session are increasingly recognized as quality assurance indicators in higher educa-

tion systems. Research indicates that early access to CA results enables students to reflect on their academic standing, adjust their study patterns, and reduce examination-related anxiety before the final examinations (Carless & Winstone, 2023). Viewed from an educational perspective, the timely publication of sessional results supports academic planning, appeals processes, and student progression, reinforcing trust in assessment systems (OECD, 2023). Quality assurance frameworks worldwide advocate these practices as part of student-centred assessment, ensuring alignment between learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and feedback delivery (UNESCO, 2021). Collectively, these feedback-related practices enhance learning effectiveness and uphold academic standards that are accepted internationally.

2.5. Challenges facing higher institution assessment framework

Globally, higher education assessment frameworks are faced with different challenges, especially in the area of funding, which limits institutions' capacity to implement robust, transparent, and learner-centred assessment systems. Inadequate funding challenges have affected assessment in all areas of infrastructure, staff development, and quality assurance mechanisms, leading to inconsistencies in evaluation standards and learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2020). There are also challenges regarding staff training and capacity building, as many academic staff are not provided with opportunities for professional development training in modern assessment methods. Higher institution staff need to be trained on modern assessment techniques such as outcome-based assessment, formative feedback, and competency-based evaluation. Research findings have shown that without these professional development training programmes, assessment practices remain largely traditional and examination-driven, falling short of internationally accepted quality assurance benchmarks (Brennan & Shah, 2021; ENQA, 2020). Higher institution assessment is also faced with the problem of technological limitations, such as inadequate digital infrastructure and low institutional readiness for e-assessment tools, which hinder the adoption of data-driven and technology-enhanced assessment systems that are central to global best practices (OECD, 2021).

In addition, resistance to change among academic staff and institutional leadership also poses a major challenge to reforming assessment frameworks. Teelken and Deem (2020) opined that this resistance is caused by academic cultures, fear of increased accountability, and limited incentives for innovation, which slow the adoption of the modern assessment frameworks. These challenges directly affect quality assurance and consistency, as part of policies, and this non-implementation has a direct consequence on comparability of assessment outcomes across institutions. International quality assurance requires consistency in assessment, as highlighted by ENQA (2020)

and UNESCO (2023). Addressing these challenges therefore demands sustained funding, systematic capacity building, technological integration, and effective change management to align higher education assessment frameworks with international standards and ensure the reliability and validity of assessment frameworks globally.

2.6. Research questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. To what extent do higher institutions in the South-South zone use the key components of summative, formative and diagnostic evaluation of educational assessment frameworks?
2. What evaluation tools are used by higher institutions in the South-South zone to evaluate student performance in the different educational assessment frameworks?
3. To what extent do the assessment frameworks used in higher institutions in the South-South align with educational standards and best practices in the usage of Bloom's Taxonomy components of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains?
4. To what extent do higher institutions in the South-South zone utilize feedback from assessments to inform and improve instructional practices?
5. What are the challenges faced by higher institutions in the South-South zone in implementing and maintaining effective assessment frameworks?

3. Methods

This study adopts a Comparative Cross-Sectional Design. The use of this design became necessary as it allowed the researcher to examine the educational assessment framework across different institutions at a particular point in time. It also enabled the researcher to make cross-sectional comparisons of approaches used in the different institutions.

The study population is the deans of faculties or schools, heads of departments, and students in the various institutions. Purposive sampling was used to select a truly representative sample of the deans, heads of departments and students in the different higher institutions. In the end, 20 deans were selected for the study: 10 from universities, 5 from polytechnics and 5 from colleges of education. A total of 80 heads of department were selected: 40 from universities, 20 from polytechnics and 20 from colleges of education. A total of 600 students were selected: 200 from universities, 200 from polytechnics and 200 from colleges of education.

The instruments employed in this research to obtain responses from staff and students, respectively, were the **Comparative Assessment Practices Questionnaire for South-South Zone Institutions (CAPQ-SSZI)**, Academic Feedback Assessment Survey (AFAS) and **Assessment Framework Challenges in Higher Insti-**

tution (AFCHI). The validity of the instruments was established using expert judgment. The instruments were presented to measurement and evaluation experts. They corrected and modified the items in the instruments and certified that the instruments were adequate and appropriate for the study. To establish the reliability of the instruments the split-half method was used. This method was adopted to ensure the internal consistency of the instruments. The instruments were administered to 30 other respondents who were not part of the study. Their responses were split into two halves for the purpose of scoring, the first half being even number items, while the second being the score of odd number items. The scores from the two halves were correlated using Pearson Product-Moment correlation and a coefficient of 0.599 was obtained as the reliability coefficient for half of the instrument, as presented in the table below (Table 1).

To obtain the instrument's total reliability, the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was used, $R_2 = \frac{2R_1}{1+R_1}$, where R_1 is the reliability of half of the instrument and R_2 is the reliability of the whole instrument. Therefore, $R_2 = \frac{2(0.599)}{1+0.599}$ and results in a reliability coefficient of 0.75 at the 0.01 level significance which implies that the instrument is highly reliable.

The instruments were administered to the respondents for data analysis. The results obtained were analysed using percentages and multiple bar charts.

4. Results

The results of the findings are presented by answering the research questions.

Research Question 1: To what extent do higher institutions in the South-South zone use the key components of summative, formative and diagnostic evaluation of educational assessment frameworks?

The results of research question 1 are presented using the multiple bar charts below (Figures 1–5);

Analysis of Figure 1 revealed that universities assign 70% of their assessment to summative evaluation, 30% to formative evaluation and no percentage to diagnostic evaluation. Both polytechnics and colleges of education assign 60% to summative evaluation and 40% to formative evaluation, and no allocation (percentage) was made to diagnostic evaluation.

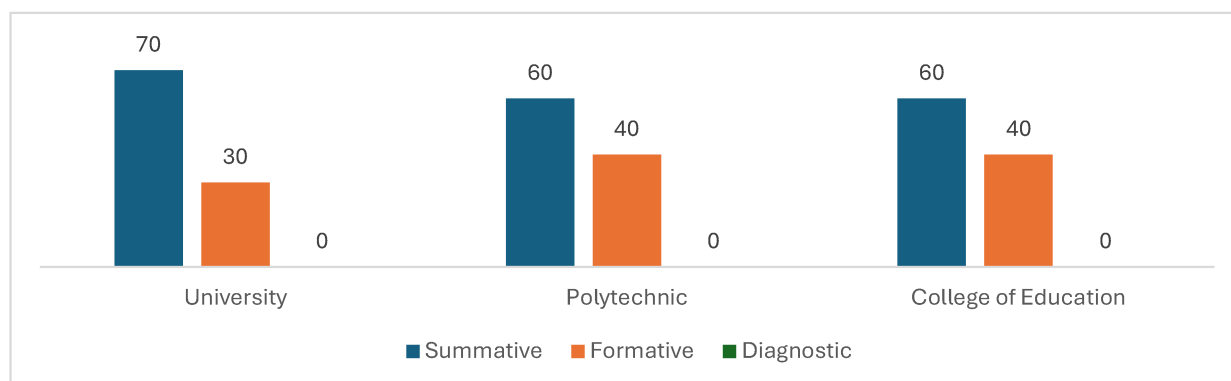
Research Question 2: What evaluation tools are used by higher institutions in the South-South zone to evaluate student performance in the different educational assessment frameworks?

Analysis of Figure 2 revealed that universities in the South-South zone assigned 10% to assignments, 20% to tests, 50% to examinations, and 20% to practical courses. Polytechnics assigned 15% to tests and 50% to examinations, while practical courses were allocated 35%. The col-

Table 1. Split-half correlation analysis using Pearson product moment.

		Odd Items	Even Items
Odd Items	Pearson Correlation	1	0.599
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	30	30
Even Items	Pearson Correlation	0.599	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	30	30

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Figure 1.** Multiple bar charts showing comparative analysis of the extent to which higher institutions in the South-South zone use components of summative, formative and diagnostic evaluation of educational assessment frameworks (data in percentages).

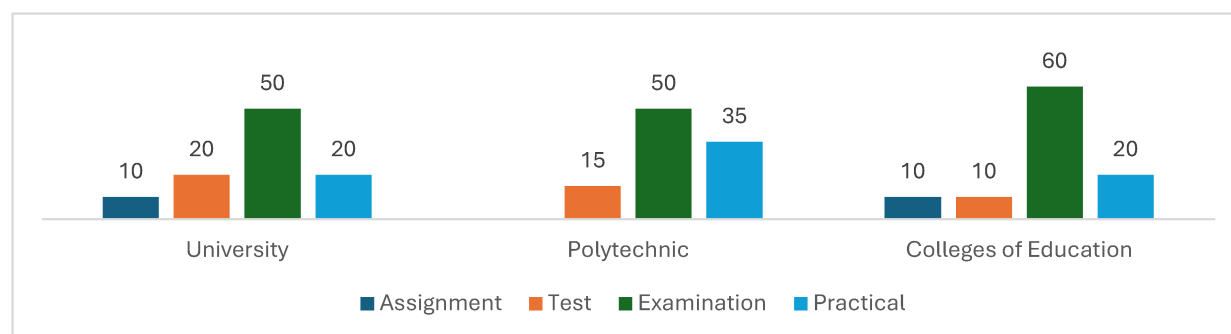
leges of education assigned 10% to assignments, 10% to tests, 60% to examinations, and 20% to practical courses.

Research Question 3: To what extent do the assessment frameworks in the South-South zone higher institutions align with educational standards and best practices in the usage of Bloom's Taxonomy components of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains?

Analysis of Figure 3 indicated that universities in the South-South zone align with best practices using Bloom's Taxonomy components of cognitive domain (70%), affective (5%), and psychomotor (25%) with courses with practical work. Polytechnics use 60% cognitive domain, 5% affective and 35% psychomotor with courses with practical work. Colleges of education adopt the same methods as the universities.

Research Question 4: To what extent do higher institutions in the South-South zone utilize feedback from assessments to inform and improve instructional practices?

The results of the analysis of Figure 4 showed that out of 200 students randomly interviewed across universities in the South-South zone, only 60(30%) students agreed that assignment scripts are being given to them by the lecturers, 20 (10%) students agreed that their CA score is shown to them before the examination, and 10 (5%) students agreed that sessional results are being released before the next session. In the polytechnics, out of 200 students randomly interviewed, 70 (35%) students agreed that assignment scripts are given to them, 20 (10%) students agreed that CA scores are shown to them before the examination and 20 (10%) students agreed that sessional re-

**Figure 2.** Bar charts showing comparative analysis of evaluation tools used by higher institutions in the South-South zone for their educational assessment frameworks (data in percentages).

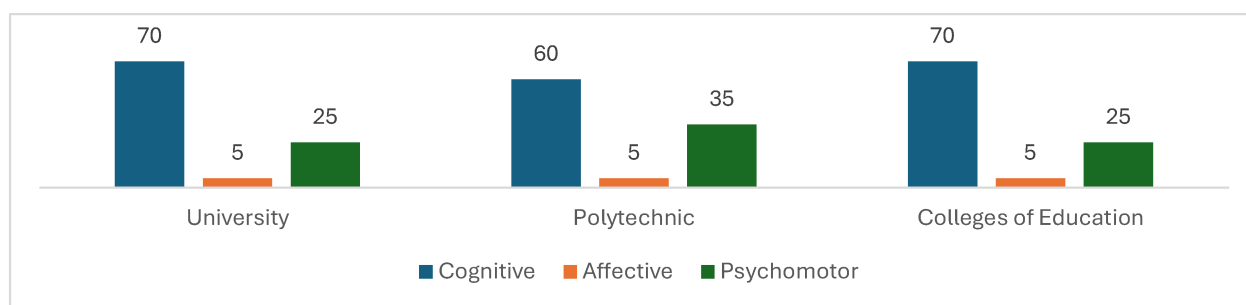


Figure 3. Bar chart (data in percentages) showing comparative analysis of how higher institutions in the South-South zone align with educational standards and best practices in the usage of Bloom's Taxonomy components of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

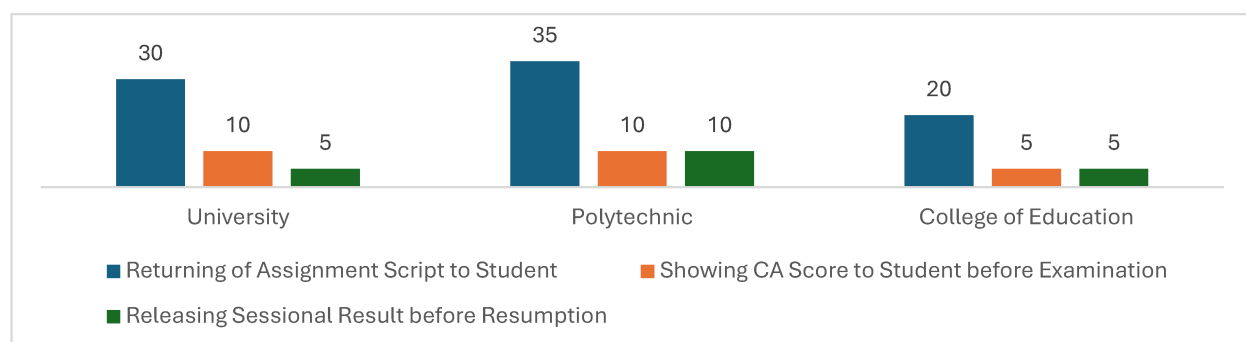


Figure 4. Bar chart (data in percentages) showing comparative analysis of how higher institutions in the South-South zone utilize feedback from assessments to inform and improve instructional practices.

sults are released before the next academic session. In the colleges of education, 200 students were randomly interviewed: 40 students (representing 20%) agreed that assignment scripts are given to them by their lecturers, 10 students (5%) agreed that they see their CA scores before the examination, and 10 students also agreed that sessional results are released before the next academic session.

Research Question 5: What are the challenges faced by higher institutions in the South-South zone in implementing and maintaining effective assessment frameworks?

Analysis of Figure 5 revealed that across universities in the South-South zone, 70% are faced with problems of in-

adequate funding, 65% are faced with a lack of staff training and capacity building, 80% are faced with problems of technological limitations, 60% of staff are resistant to change and 60% are faced with challenges of quality assurance and consistency. In polytechnics, 65% of institutions are faced with problems of inadequate funding. Additionally, 80% of them are faced with a lack of staff training and capacity building, 50% experience problems of technological limitations, 60% of staff are resistant to change, and 80% are faced with challenges of quality assurance and consistency. The analysis equally showed that in colleges of education, 80% face problems of inadequate funding, 90% lack staff training and capacity building, 85% experience technolog-

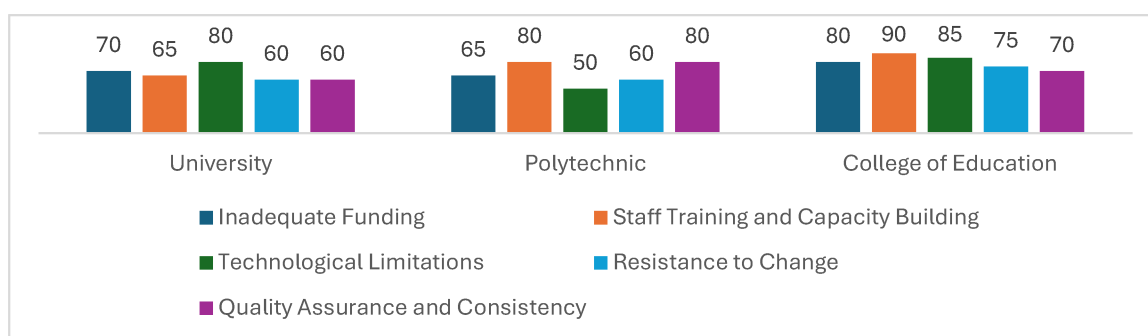


Figure 5. Bar chart (data in percentages) showing challenges faced by higher institutions in the South-South zone in implementing and maintaining effective assessment frameworks.

ical limitations, 75% of staff are resistant to change, and 70% face challenges of quality assurance and consistency.

5. Discussions

The findings of this study revealed a clear dominance of summative evaluation across higher institutions in the South-South zone of Nigeria, with universities allocating 70% of assessment to summative evaluation, while polytechnics and colleges of education allocated 60%, which shows over-reliance on end-of-course examinations and certification-oriented assessment. These results show partial alignment with global best practices, as summative evaluation remains an essential component of quality assurance frameworks worldwide for grading, certification, and accountability (ENQA, 2020; OECD, 2021). However, the findings differ from international standards that emphasize a balance between formative, diagnostic, and summative evaluations in assessment frameworks (Kayyali, 2024). While formative evaluation is moderately utilized by 30% of universities and 40% of polytechnics and colleges of education, its application remains insufficient when compared with global practices that prioritize continuous feedback, learning analytics, and real-time instructional adjustment as core quality assurance mechanisms (Black & William, 2020; BMC Medical Education, 2024; SAGE Journals, 2025). The research findings show that a complete absence of diagnostic evaluation across all institution types shows non-compliance with international best practices, where diagnostic assessments are regarded as foundational for identifying learner readiness, addressing diversity, and informing instructional planning within quality assurance systems (Chufama & Sithole, 2023; OECD, 2021). This shortfall underscores a significant weakness in the assessment frameworks of higher institutions in South-South Nigeria, as the lack of diagnostic evaluation undermines inclusiveness, early intervention, and curriculum responsiveness. These findings show that higher institutions in South-South zone demonstrate limited similarities with international best practices in areas of summative and formative assessments; however, the findings fall short of global standards due to the imbalance among summative, formative and diagnostic evaluation thereby weakening the effectiveness, equity, and developmental purpose of assessment frameworks when compared to international assessment standards, as also highlighted by ENQA (2020) and Kayyali (2024).

The results of the findings also revealed that higher institutions in the South-South zone rely predominantly on examinations as the major evaluation tool, with universities and colleges of education allocating 50% and 60% respectively, while polytechnics also assign a substantial proportion to examinations alongside practical work. This form of evaluation shows a partial conformity with international best practices, as examinations and tests remain globally recognized tools for measuring cognitive achievement. This will provide room for standardization, reliability,

and accountability within quality assurance systems, as opined by Springer (2024) and ENQA (2020). However, the findings revealed that in line with global standards, there is an imbalance among evaluation tools. International best practices emphasize a deliberate combination of assignments, tests, practical work, and examinations to enhance a comprehensive, valid, and authentic assessment that integrates cognitive, psychomotor, and applied competencies (Zou et al., 2024; Kayyali, 2024). While polytechnics show relative alignment through a higher allocation to practical work (35%), universities and colleges of education place limited emphasis on assignments and practical activities, indicating insufficient support for continuous assessment, skills application, and formative learning opportunities. This falls short of global quality assurance frameworks that state the need for using various assessment tools to reduce over-reliance on examinations and enhance feedback to learners, learner engagement, and competence development, as recommended by Zou et al. (2024) and Springer (2024). The low percentage assigned to assignments and tests across higher institutions in South-South Nigeria falls short of international best practices due to more emphasis on examinations and the inadequate integration of other evaluation tools. ENQA (2020) and Kayyali (2024) found that this will weaken the validity, inclusiveness, and developmental focus of their assessment frameworks when compared to globally accepted quality assurance standards.

The findings equally revealed that higher institutions in the South-South zone of Nigeria largely align their assessment practices with Bloom's Taxonomy through high emphasis on the cognitive domain, with universities and colleges of education allocating 70% and polytechnics 60%, while the psychomotor domain receives moderate attention in the polytechnics, where practical-oriented courses account for 35%. This method is partially in line with global best practices, as international quality assurance frameworks advocate the cognitive domain as a centre for measuring knowledge acquisition and higher-order thinking skills, while the psychomotor domain is essential in the area of skills development and performance-based assessment (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2020; Scully, 2021; Biggs & Tang, 2021). However, the findings reveal a significant difference from international standards as a result of total neglect of the affective domain in the universities, colleges, and polytechnics, where only 5% alignment is reported. Global best practices in higher education stress a balance of all the domains to ensure holistic graduate development, encompassing ethical reasoning, professional values, motivation, and interpersonal skills (Pangga et al., 2024; Potgieter et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2021). The limited emphasis on the affective domain in South-South Nigeria's higher institutions is at variance with international accreditation expectations that promote constructive alignment and comprehensive assessment of graduate attributes beyond academic knowledge alone (OECD, 2023). Consequently, while higher institutions in South-South Nigeria demonstrate similarity with global practices through the as-

assessment of cognitive and psychomotor competencies, they fall short of international best practices in the area of the affective domain, thereby weakening the holistic quality assurance of their assessment frameworks and limiting their ability to produce globally competitive, ethically grounded, and socially responsive graduates (Biggs & Tang, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

The findings further highlighted a generally weak utilization of assessment feedback across higher institutions in the South-South zone, as only a small proportion of students reported receiving assignment scripts, seeing continuous assessment (CA) scores before examinations, or accessing sessional results before the next academic session. This is generally in sharp contrast with international best practices, which emphasize feedback as a central component of quality assurance and effective assessment frameworks in higher education (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Globally, timely, helpful and practical feedback is regarded as essential for enhancing student learning, guiding instructional improvement, and supporting self-regulated learning (Black & William, 2020; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2024). While the limited feedback practices observed in universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in South-South Nigeria show non-compliance with international standards through late or non-release of assignment scripts and CA scores, the overall inconsistency and low coverage indicate a significant deviation from globally accepted quality assurance models that require systematic and transparent feedback mechanisms as revealed in the findings of ENQA (2020) and Guskey and Jung (2022). The findings of Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) and OECD (2021) also highlighted that international frameworks should combine feedback into formative assessment processes, often supported by digital platforms and learning analytics, to ensure continuous improvement and accountability. The inability of higher institutions in South-South Nigeria to provide regular, timely, and comprehensive feedback is a major shortfall in their assessment frameworks, thereby neglecting student engagement, instructional effectiveness, and alignment with global best practices in higher education quality assurance, as stressed by Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Black and William (2020).

These findings show that higher institutions in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria are faced with various problems similar to those experienced in other developing countries around the world. These problems include inadequate funding, lack of staff training and capacity building, technological limitations, resistance to change, and weaknesses in quality assurance and consistency across universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education as also observed in the findings of Akinyele (2019) and Onyechere (2020). However, international best practices in quality assurance have identified continuous investment in assessment infrastructure, continuous professional development, robust technological integration, and strong policy enforcement as prerequisites for effective and

credible assessment frameworks (ENQA, 2020; Kayyali, 2024). The high level of inadequate funding and lack of staff training revealed in this study across South-South Nigeria higher institutions does not align with global quality assurance standards that noted the importance of assessment literacy, innovation, and the use of digital and competency-based assessment methods to enhance validity and reliability of modern assessment techniques (OECD, 2021; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). The continuous technological limitations and resistance to change observed in the study are a complete divergence from international standards, where adaptive institutional cultures and e-assessment systems are central to modern assessment practices (Nwankwo & Okoli, 2021; Ofoegbu, 2015). The implication of this is that higher institutions in South-South Nigeria fall short of international best practices due to systemic weaknesses in funding, capacity building, technological readiness, and quality assurance enforcement, which collectively undermine the consistency, innovation, and global competitiveness of their assessment frameworks when compared with internationally accepted quality assurance benchmarks (ENQA, 2020; Kayyali, 2024).

6. Conclusions

1. Educational assessment frameworks play an important role in improving learning outcomes, instructional practices, and institutional performance in higher institutions all over the world.
2. There is considerable variation in how different institutions (universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education) apply assessment frameworks, impacting the consistency of student evaluations.
3. This study highlighted that most institutions overly rely on summative assessments, thereby limiting the benefits of formative and diagnostic assessments for student development.
4. The important role of feedback mechanisms across institutions is neglected, with limited opportunities for students to learn from their past mistakes in performance and improve during the teaching and learning process.
5. The implementation of continuous assessment in theory, but not in practice, varies significantly within and across institutions, leading to inconsistencies in student evaluations.
6. Higher institutions generally align with Bloom's Taxonomy, which focuses on cognitive and psychomotor domains, but there is a noticeable under-emphasis on the affective domain.
7. Inadequate knowledge of technological know-how has hindered the staff in the full implementation of modern assessment practices, such as e-assessments, which could improve feedback and evaluation processes.
8. Inadequate funding is a critical challenge across all higher institutions, which has affected the quality and consistency of assessment practices.

9. Staff in the higher institutions in the South-South zone are not properly trained in modern assessment techniques, thus hampering the adoption of innovative methods such as portfolio-based and competency-based assessments.
10. The inconsistent application of assessment frameworks negatively affects the ability of institutions to maintain high educational standards, thereby limiting their global competitiveness.

7. Recommendations

1. Apart from summative evaluation higher institutions in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria should also make use of formative and diagnostic assessments to provide ongoing feedback and support to students, fostering deeper learning in line with international best practices.
2. The adoption of a standardized assessment framework across higher institutions should be encouraged to ensure consistency and standardization in student evaluations to align with national and international best practices.
3. Government and higher institutions should encourage the use of modern assessment tools and other technological resources.
4. There should be regular staff training on the use of modern assessment tools and practices.
5. Government and private stakeholders should invest in our educational sector, including higher institutions, to support the adoption of effective assessment frameworks and improve educational infrastructure as deemed acceptable by international quality assurance accreditation bodies.
6. Institutions should integrate the affective domain in their assessments to promote emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and overall student well-being.
7. Institutions should regularly review and update their assessment frameworks to align with modern trends that meet the needs of educational assessment in the 21st century.
8. Clear policies on the release of assessment results and continuous assessment scores should be adopted and implemented.
9. The use of external examiners in final-year assessments should involve not only final-year classes but also other levels to ensure objectivity, transparency, and the maintenance of academic standards across the higher institutions in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria to align with international best practices.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data availability statement

Data supporting these findings are available within the article and details about the data are available upon request.

Institutional review board statement

Not applicable.

Informed consent statement

Written informed consent has been obtained from the authority of the higher institutions where the research was conducted.

Sample availability

Purposive Sampling was used to select a true representative sample of the deans, heads of departments and students in the different higher institutions. A total of 20 deans were selected for the study: 10 from universities, 5 from polytechnics and 5 from colleges of education. A total of 80 heads of department were selected: 40 from universities, 20 from polytechnics and 20 from colleges of education. A total of 600 students were selected: 200 from universities, 200 from polytechnics and 200 from colleges of education.

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