

Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality Amid Economic Downturns in Secondary schools in North East Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study was on Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality amid Economic Downturns in Secondary schools in North East Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The correlational research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of 3017 teaching staff in the 87 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District as at during 2024/2025 academic year. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 353 Teachers for the study. Multistage sampling procedure involving cluster sampling technique, proportionate stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling technique was used in selection of the sample. Data was collected using two researcher developed instruments named, "Online Learning Questionnaire (OLQ) and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality amid Economic Downturns Questionnaire (TEAQEDQ)". The instruments were further subjected to face validity by three experts. The reliability of the instruments determined using Cronbach Alpha Statistics were 0.86 and 0.78 for OLQ and TEAQEDQ respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistic in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed there is a significant relationship between awareness, utilization of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns. Recommendations were made among others that Government should also invest in improving digital infrastructure in secondary schools by ensuring reliable internet access, adequate provision of devices, and stable electricity, especially in rural and underserved areas.

Keywords: Awareness. Economic, Learning, Online, Teacher,

Introduction

Economic downturns have become a recurring reality in many parts of the world, affecting all sectors, including education. These downturns often characterized by a decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), high inflation, rising unemployment, and general fiscal instability have far-reaching consequences that permeate the educational landscape. The economic constraints imposed by such downturns affect public funding for education, teacher salaries, the provision of instructional materials, and investment in infrastructure (UNESCO, 2021). With shrinking national budgets and redirected governmental priorities, schools and educational institutions are compelled to operate under resource-strained conditions. In such contexts, the burden often falls heavily on educators who must strive to maintain quality standards despite limited support. Teachers, being the linchpins of instructional delivery and

assessment, are particularly affected in their capacity to provide effective educational assessment under these financial and systemic constraints.

Educational assessment quality defined as the degree to which assessment practices are valid, reliable, fair, and aligned with instructional goals. It is critical to the success of any educational system (Brookhart, 2023). Assessments serve not only as tools for measuring learning outcomes but also as feedback mechanisms to inform instruction and support students' development. However, during economic downturns, the ability of teachers to maintain high assessment standards becomes significantly challenged. Limited access to professional development opportunities, outdated assessment tools, lack of instructional resources, and increased workload due to teacher shortages are some of the prevailing issues (Ogunode, 2020). These conditions often result in teachers relying on less robust or traditional forms of assessment, such as rote testing and recall-based examinations, which do not accurately capture students' learning capabilities or foster critical thinking. Consequently, assessment practices may become inconsistent, poorly aligned with learning objectives, and unresponsive to learners' individual needs. Amid these challenges, the emergence and growth of online learning platforms present a potential avenue for educational resilience and improvement. Online learning refers to the use of internet-based technologies to facilitate teaching and learning processes remotely or in blended formats (Kpolovie, 2021). In times of economic downturns, the adaptability and scalability of online learning tools can provide teachers with affordable and flexible means of sustaining instructional and assessment quality. However, this potential is contingent upon two critical factors: awareness and utilization.

Awareness of online learning is the first step in enabling teachers to embrace digital solutions in times of educational crises. It encompasses familiarity with online platforms such as Moodle, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Zoom, and various assessment applications like Kahoot, Quizizz, and Socrative. When teachers are aware of such tools, they begin to understand how these can be harnessed to enhance assessment practices offering alternatives to paper-based testing, enabling real-time feedback, and fostering more interactive and personalized evaluations (Means *et al.*, 2024). In contexts of economic downturn, where resources such as printing materials and physical examination spaces are limited, digital platforms offer cost-effective alternatives. For example, an economically constrained school may not afford regular printed test sheets, but a teacher who is aware of free or low-cost online assessment tools can develop and administer tests digitally. This, in turn, sustains the cycle of continuous assessment, ensures timely feedback, and supports learning progression without the physical limitations that come with financial scarcity.

Moreover, awareness of online learning increases teachers' motivation to seek out professional development in digital pedagogy, especially when traditional training resources are unavailable. During economic crises, government-sponsored capacity-building programs for teachers are often the first to be suspended. In such scenarios, a teacher who is aware of online Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and other open educational resources (OERs)

may independently enroll in training to enhance their assessment skills. This autonomous pursuit of knowledge enhances their competence in designing and administering quality assessments, even in difficult circumstances. Furthermore, awareness leads to better networking opportunities among educators, allowing them to share best practices, co-develop assessment strategies, and access peer-reviewed resources (Umoren, 2022). These collaborative engagements can significantly contribute to improving assessment quality despite economic hardships. However, awareness alone is not sufficient. The actual utilization of online learning tools is what ultimately drives the transformation in educational assessment quality.

Utilization of online learning refers to the practical engagement with and application of digital platforms in delivering instruction and assessment. This involves using online tools to create diverse forms of assessment, such as quizzes, project submissions, peer assessments, and reflective journals. When teachers actively use these tools, they are able to implement more robust and varied assessment methods that move beyond the traditional pen-and-paper approach (Wang, 2020). The flexibility and immediacy provided by these tools empower teachers to assess not just cognitive knowledge but also students' creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration skills. Such comprehensive assessment methods are crucial in developing holistic learners, especially during periods of instability when conventional classroom settings are disrupted. In periods of economic downturn, the utilization of online assessment tools helps teachers to bypass logistical and financial constraints. For instance, instead of conducting in-person examinations that may require printed materials, invigilation, and classroom space, teachers can use platforms like Google Forms or Microsoft Forms to create and distribute tests to students (Isip, 2021). These digital tools often provide instant grading, which saves time and ensures efficiency. Additionally, teachers can use learning management systems (LMS) to track student progress over time, identify learning gaps, and tailor instruction accordingly. These forms of formative and summative assessment become crucial in maintaining educational standards when the system is under financial stress. By utilizing online learning, teachers not only enhance the quality of assessment but also align with global best practices in educational innovation.

Furthermore, utilization of online learning supports inclusive assessment. In resource-poor environments exacerbated by economic downturns, students often have varied access to learning materials and support systems. Online tools allow for differentiated assessment, enabling teachers to customize tasks based on learners' abilities and learning styles. This ensures that no student is left behind due to systemic challenges. For example, a teacher can assign video-based assessments for auditory learners, quizzes for analytical thinkers, and creative submissions for artistic learners. The data analytics features in many online platforms also help teachers to monitor learner performance trends, which supports data-informed instructional decisions. All these contribute to improved assessment quality despite the challenges presented by economic instability.

Nevertheless, the extent to which teachers can utilize online learning effectively during economic downturns is influenced by factors such as infrastructure, digital literacy, and administrative support. Many teachers, particularly in developing countries, face challenges such as erratic power supply, poor internet connectivity, and lack of access to digital devices (Afolabi & Akinbobola, 2020). The relationship between online learning and teachers' assessment quality amid economic downturns is therefore complex. Awareness creates the cognitive foundation upon which practical utilization can be built, while utilization ensures the actual transformation of assessment practices. It is based on this background, that the researchers were encouraged to carry out this study on Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality Amid Economic Downturns in Secondary schools in North East Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

Empirically, Opara (2022), conducted a study titled *“Awareness of Online Learning Platforms and Teachers’ Assessment Practices in Secondary Schools during Economic Recession in Imo State,”* the researcher investigated how teachers’ awareness of online learning tools influenced their ability to maintain quality assessment practices amid economic challenges. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population consisted of all public secondary school teachers in the state, estimated at 21,230 teachers. From this population, a sample of 150 teachers was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation from urban and rural schools. The researchers developed a structured questionnaire titled “Awareness of Online Learning and Assessment Practices Questionnaire” (AOLAPQ) to gather data. The instrument was subjected to content validation by three experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation. To establish reliability, the instrument was administered to 30 teachers in a neighboring district not included in the main study, and a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained, indicating good internal consistency. Data collected were analyzed using mean scores and independent t-test statistics. The findings revealed that teachers with higher awareness of online learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, and Kahoot demonstrated significantly better assessment quality than those with low awareness.

Similarly, a study by Bello and Yusuf (2023) titled *“Utilization of Digital Tools and Teachers’ Assessment Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Lagos State during Economic Decline”* explored how actual use of online learning resources influenced the quality of educational assessments among teachers. The study employed a correlational research design and was conducted in Lagos Mainland Educational District. The population comprised 2,500 public secondary school teachers, out of which 200 were selected through purposive sampling based on their prior exposure to digital training programs. A researcher-made instrument called “Digital Utilization and Assessment Quality Scale” (DUAQS) was used for data collection. This instrument was validated by specialists in educational technology and curriculum studies at Lagos State University. The reliability of the instrument was tested through a pilot study involving 40 teachers in Ikeja District, yielding a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.87. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were

used alongside Pearson Product Moment Correlation to analyze the data. The results indicated a moderate but significant positive correlation between teachers' utilization of online learning tools (such as Zoom, Google Forms, and Moodle) and the effectiveness of their assessment practices, especially in formative evaluation and feedback provision.

From the above reviews, since the studies were conducted in other states in Nigeria, therefore, the researchers were motivated to carry out a study to determine the relationship between Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality Amid Economic Downturns in Secondary schools in North East Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, teachers' educational assessment quality should reflect validity, reliability, fairness, and alignment with instructional objectives, ensuring that all learners are evaluated accurately and equitably. In such optimal conditions, teachers have access to adequate training, functional assessment tools, supportive infrastructure, and a stable educational environment that promotes continuous professional development and effective assessment practices. However, the reality in many secondary schools, particularly in economically strained environments, deviates sharply from this ideal. Economic downturns have led to significant reductions in education budgets, resulting in insufficient teaching resources, delayed teacher salaries, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to technological tools that support modern assessment methods. These financial challenges have placed teachers under immense pressure, forcing many to resort to outdated, one-size-fits-all assessment methods that neither capture diverse learning outcomes nor promote meaningful feedback.

Though school management teams have made efforts to cushion the effect of these economic constraints such as organizing internal workshops, reallocating scarce resources to procure basic instructional materials, and encouraging peer collaboration among teachers. These interventions have often proven inadequate. The persistence of these challenges raises serious concerns about the effectiveness and integrity of student evaluations in secondary schools during times of economic hardship. It was based on this problem that the researchers were motivated to determine the relationship between Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality Amid Economic Downturns in Secondary schools in North East Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the conduct of the study:

1. What is the relationship between awareness of Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality amid Economic Downturns?
2. What is the relationship between utilization of Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality amid Economic Downturns?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study and tested at .05 alpha level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between awareness of Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality amid Economic Downturns.
2. There is no significant relationship between utilization of Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality amid Economic Downturns.

Methodology

The Correlational research design was adopted in the study. This is a design that have crucial importance that must be applied in any investigation that is directly aimed at determining relationship between Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality Amid Economic Downturns (Kpolovie, 2016). The design was considered appropriate since the researcher is interested in determining the relationship between Online Learning and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality Amid Economic Downturns. The population comprised of 3017 teaching staff in the 87 public secondary schools in the nine Local Education Committees (LEC) in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District as at during 2024/2025 academic year (Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board, Uyo, 2025). The sample size for this study was 353 Teachers representing approximately (12%) of the teachers. (10%) of the population is considered adequate for most educational research studies, especially when the population is large. According to Gay *et al.*, (2017), for a population of several thousand, a sample size of (10%) or less can still yield valid and reliable results, provided the sample is representative of the population in terms of key characteristics such as gender, qualification, and teaching experience. Multistage sampling procedure involving cluster sampling technique, proportionate stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling technique was used in selection of the sample.

A researcher-made and developed instruments entitled "Online Learning Questionnaire (OLQ) and Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality amid Economic Downturns Questionnaire (TEAQAEDQ)" were used for data collection. The OLQ was designed using a five-point rating scale to elicit information on online learning based on the following variables: awareness of online learning and utilization of online learning. The OLQ had 10 items. Five items for each sub-variable. While the TEAQAEDQ had 10 items on Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns. The response categories made up of five-point rating scale in which respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement against each item are as follows thus:

Very High Extent (VHE)= 5 points, High Extent (HE)= 4 points, Moderate Extent (ME)= 3 points, Low Extent (LE)= 2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point

Face validity of the instruments were carried out by three (3) experts which included two experts in Department of Curriculum Studies, educational management and planning, and one from the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education, Faculty of Education,

University of Uyo. The validity was done to ensure that the instruments are valid for this study. In all, the three experts were requested to read through the instruments, vet the items for clarity, relevance and suitability for the study. The inputs from the experts were in-cooperated into the final draft of the instruments. To determine the reliability of the instruments, the researcher will randomly select 30 staff as respondents in a public secondary schools in the North East Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State who were part of the population but will not be part of the study sample to respond to the instruments. Data generated were subjected to inter-item analysis using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient Statistic for the determination of the reliability coefficients. The reliability coefficient of OLQ and TEAQAEDQ were 0.86 and 0.78 respectively. These coefficients revealed that the instruments were reliable for this study. The researcher with the help of three briefed research assistants administered the instruments to the selected respondents. This was done after seeking permission from the respective school principals through a letter of introduction from the researcher's institution to carry out the study. Permission obtained from the respective Principals allowed the subjects to respond to the items in the Questionnaires. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondents during break periods to avoid disruption of classes and retrieved after one hour. This exercise lasted for three weeks.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistic in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used for data analysis. The r-value in PPMC statistic was used to answer the research questions while the significance value will be used to test the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. If the value of significance value is less than .05 alpha level, the null hypothesis of no significance is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld and vice versa.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns

Variables	n	r	p-cal.	p-crit.	Decision at .05 alpha
Awareness of Online Learning	353				
Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality	353	.743	.000	.05	Significant.

Source: Computed by the Researcher using data from the respondents (2023).

From the result in Table 1, it is revealed that r-value is .743. This implied that there is a strong positive relationship between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns. This means that as awareness of Online Learning increase, Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns also increase strongly. Therefore, awareness of online learning could be related to Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns.

To determine whether the relationship was significant, the Table also revealed that the p-cal of .000 is less than the .05 alpha level of significance at the 351 degrees of freedom. This showed that the formulated null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between utilization of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns?

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between utilization of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between utilization of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns

Variables	n	r	p-cal.	p-	Decision at .05
		crit.			alpha
Utilization of Online Learning	353				
Teachers' Educational Assessment Quality	353	-.642	.021	.05	Significant.

Source: Computed by the Researcher using data from the respondents (2025).

From the result in Table 2, it is revealed that r-value is -.642. This implied that there is a moderate negative relationship between utilization of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns. This means that as utilization of online learning increase, Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns also increase strongly. Therefore, awareness of online learning could enhance Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns.

To determine whether the relationship was significant, the table also revealed that the p-cal of .000 is less than the .05 alpha level of significance at the 351 degrees of freedom. This showed that the formulated null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns.

Discussion of Findings

Awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns

The result of hypothesis one revealed that, there is a significant relationship between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns. It was also revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between awareness of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns. This finding could be attributed to the fact that when teachers are aware of platforms such as Google Forms, Quizizz, and Moodle, they can design and administer assessments without relying on scarce physical resources like paper, printers, or test booklets. This awareness also introduces them to diverse assessment formats such as interactive quizzes, timed assignments, automated grading, and multimedia-based tasks that improve the validity, reliability, and timeliness of student evaluations. The findings of this study agreed with the findings of Opara (2022) who reported that teachers with higher awareness of online learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, and Kahoot demonstrated significantly better assessment quality than those with low awareness.

Utilization of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns

The result of hypothesis two revealed that, there is a significant relationship between utilization of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns. It was also revealed that there is a moderate negative relationship between utilization of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns. This finding could be attributed to the fact that many teachers, especially in resource-constrained environments, struggle with poor internet connectivity, lack of digital devices, and unreliable electricity, making it difficult to consistently use online tools for assessment. Even when platforms are available, limited digital literacy prevents effective integration into classroom practice, resulting in superficial or incorrect use of online assessment methods. The findings of this study disagreed with the findings of Bello and Yusuf (2023) who reported that significant positive correlation between teachers' utilization of online learning tools (such as Zoom, Google Forms, and Moodle) and the effectiveness of their assessment practices.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between awareness, utilization of online learning and Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns. Hence, awareness of online learning enhance Teachers' educational assessment quality amid economic downturns but utilization of online learning does not.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

1. The government of Nigeria should intensify efforts to provide consistent and large-scale digital literacy training for teachers, focusing not only on general ICT skills but specifically on how to effectively utilize online learning tools for assessment purposes.
2. Nigerian government should also invest in improving digital infrastructure in secondary schools by ensuring reliable internet access, adequate provision of devices, and stable electricity, especially in rural and underserved areas.

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