TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF PEER ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' LEARNING IN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN ANIOCHA SOUTH LGA OF DELTA STATE

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Abstract

Peer assessment is a collaborative process where students evaluate each other's work and a valuable tool for both learning and growth. Teachers often lean towards teacher assessment, relying on their own evaluations. Teacher-made tests are commonly employed for teaching and learning of CRS. This assessment method though serves as a significant tool in assessing students' understanding and progress requires some other approaches such as peer assessment technique. The study examined teachers' perception of the peer assessment technique of secondary school students' learning in Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in Aniocha South LGA of Delta State. The study adopted non-experimenatl design of survey research. The population of the study comprised 34 CRS teachers. A sample of 27 teachers was drawn from the population. The study was conducted in 17 privately owned secondary schools in Aniocha South LGA selected through simple random sampling technique. A questionnaire titled "Teachers' Perception and Peer Assessment Technique Questionnaire" (TPPATQ) was used to obtain relevant information from 27 respondents selected from the CRS teachers of the privately-owned secondary schools. Three research questions guided the study. The data collected were analysed using mean and presented in tables. The result of the study showed that peer assessment was perceived by teachers as a technique that encourages classroom learning activities, student-to-student assessment, and student-teacher feedback. Peer assessment improves the learning of CRS. The study recommends that teachers adopt peer assessment in classroom learning activities in CRS.

Introduction

Assessment involves gathering information about students learning and making judgments about their progress. This information can be obtained from various sources, including performances, projects, portfolios, observations, and tests (Seifert & Sutton, 2021). Assessment as defined by Kizlik (2014) is a process of gathering information about specific objectives or goals. Whether these objectives are implicit or explicit, assessment is most effective when aligned with the intended goals or objectives for which it is designed. Formative assessment primarily focuses on enhancing students' learning, while summative assessment provides an overall evaluation. Formative assessment supports learning, whereas summative assessment evaluates learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam 2003).

Formative assessment, which is designed for learning, involves continuous interaction between the learner and the teacher. It occurs during everyday classroom activities through ongoing dialogues and feedback loops. Immediate feedback guides further learning (Stobart, 2008). In similar terms, formative assessment offers feedback to both the teacher and the students, helping gauge the effectiveness of teaching, for example, weekly tests, terminal examinations, etc (Gafoor 2013). That is why, the formative assessment process is often called 'feedback' (Burgwald 2021). The effect of formative assessment lies in the quality of the feedback given to students regarding their learning progress and to teachers regarding their instructional methods. It is all about enhancing

the teaching and learning experience through constructive feedback (Ozan & Kincal 2018). Formative assessment is a continuous and dynamic process employed by both educators and students to enhance teaching and learning. Therefore, formative assessment serves as a monitoring learning process and as feedback for improvement (Main, 2021). As a monitoring learning process, it allows educators to keep track of how students are progressing in their learning journey. By providing continuous feedback, formative assessment helps learners enhance their understanding and assists instructors in refining their teaching methods. Peer assessment is one of the formative assessment methods that enhances learning. Because of its usefulness, Double, McGrane & Hopfenbeck (2020) noted that education experts are promoting the inclusion of peer assessment within schools and teaching methods. This approach involves students evaluating each other's work, contributing to a collaborative learning environment.

Peer assessment is one of the ways through which formative assessment can be carried out in the classroom by the teacher. Formative peer assessment is required for in-depth learning. According to Shengkai, Fang and Hui (2022), peer assessment is a crucial aspect of classroom-based evaluation due to its focus on learning and its formative nature. It involves students assessing and providing feedback to their peers, which contributes to a deeper understanding of the material and promotes growth. Peer assessment offers several advantages for students' learning. Peer assessment, because it is formative can be considered a formative assessment technique. It is an important aspect of formative assessment. Van Gennip, Segers and Tillema (2009) noted that peer assessment is a collaborative process where individuals or groups exchange performance grades and provide feedback to each other. The goal is to improve the performance of an individual or a group.

In peer assessment, students engage in thoughtful reflection on their peers' work. This process fosters a deeper understanding of their own learning and offers opportunities for in-depth examination of their work and performance. Ultimately, it encourages students to become more autonomous learners. Peer assessment involves students evaluating each other's work based on specific criteria and providing feedback suggestions (New South Wales Department of Education, 2022). This implies that peer assessment is done under the strong supervision of the teacher in the classroom. It is the teacher that sets the criteria for assessment. When students work in groups, they assess each other's performance based on specific guidelines or a rubric. This process enables them to provide both numerical and descriptive feedback. Alongside receiving peer feedback, each group member also has the chance to self-reflect on their performance within the group. When integrated with the assessment by the teacher, this dual approach of peer and self-assessment offers a holistic view of a student's learning journey and overall performance. At the formative stage, each group member will evaluate the learning outcomes of their peers, including their outcomes. That is why formative assessment is valuable because it enables a group to continuously evaluate their learning activities and adapt their initial plans as they work toward the outcome (Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2012). To enhance students feedback skills, William (2016) suggests that teachers can start by sharing anonymous samples of students' work to colleagues, asking them to describe what feedback they would give the creator of the work. Then, they can progress to sharing actual work from their peers and encourage students to provide constructive feedback. Finally, guide students toward self-assessment, empowering them to critically evaluate their own work and identify areas for improvement. This can be called formative feedback.

In the formative feedback process, students offer constructive feedback on drafts, which they can then revise before submitting the final product. This approach can be implemented either as an in-class activity or through online tools like Canvas. The teacher assigns a final grade based on the cumulative progress. By using a sequence of assignments, students receive peer feedback after each task and can apply that feedback to subsequent assignments, gradually improving their work overtime. For formative feedback to be achievable, the following steps are needed

(Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 2022):

1. Students receive an overview of the assignment and its criteria

2. Students are trained in assessing and providing constructive feedback

3. Students complete and submit their initial drafts

4. Students evaluate drafts from their peers and offer feedback

5. Based on received feedback, students revise their work for final submission. They also reflect on the feedback received.

6. The teacher assigns grades to the completed assignments

7. The teacher discusses the activity with the entire class

In a study carried out by Wanner and Palmer (2018), peer assessment has been shown to foster essential student capabilities. These include assuming greater responsibility for their learning, gaining deeper insights into the subject matter, understanding assessment criteria, making value-based judgments, and refining critical reflection skills. Despite its underutilization, peer assessment remains a powerful tool for student growth. Peer assessment technique is a versatile approach applicable across various disciplines, including CRS. By engaging students in evaluating each other's work, it fosters essential knowledge, values, behaviours, attitudes, and skills. These competencies are crucial for effective adaptation in Nigeria's dynamic, multi-faith, and multiethnic society (Eluu & Ikwumelu 2014). CRS serves multiple purposes in students' lives. It begins by imparting knowledge about God and subsequently focuses on instilling moral values. These values, derived from biblical stories and events, play a pivotal role in shaping human behaviour (Njoku and Njoku 2015).

The type of assessment that is commonly done in schools is a test, especially a paper-and-pencil test, and it is often teacher-centered. That is, teacher-made assessment. Assessment can be teacher-centered or learner-centered. Learner-centered assessment is the peer assessment method whereby the learners or students assess the work of their peers. It is mainly classroom oriented. The practice of peer assessment as a tool for learning is scarcely done in schools. Most teachers prefer teacher assessment, especially teacher-made tests. It was discovered in the course of the study that one method of assessment is mostly used and it does not improve the learning of CRS. It is necessary to involve students in their learning. Both teacher's assessment and peer assessment are required for learning. To establish teachers' perceptions about how peer assessment improves learning, the researcher decided to carry out this study among CRS teachers in privately owned secondary schools in Aniocha South LGA of Delta State.

The main purpose of the study was to find out teachers' perception of peer assessment technique of secondary school students learning in Christian Religious Studies in Aniocha South LGA of Delta State.

Specifically, the study was designed to find out:

1. teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages classroom learning activities in CRS

2. teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages student-to-student assessment in CRS

3. teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages student-to-teacher feedback in CRS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the mean ratings on teachers' perceptions on how peer assessment technique encourages classroom learning activities in CRS?

2. What are the mean ratings on teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages student-to-student assessment in CRS?

3. What are the mean ratings on teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages student-to-teacher feedback in CRS?

Methodology

The study employed a non-experimental design of survey research type. The population of the study consisted of 34 CRS teachers of the 17 privately owned secondary schools in Aniocha South LGA of Delta State (Ministry of Education Aniocha South LGA, 2022). Twenty-seven CRS teachers were sampled for the study, and the sample size was obtained through a purposive sampling technique. A questionnaire titled "Teachers' Perception and Peer Assessment Technique Questionnaire" (TPPATQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by two specialists in the field of Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument has two sections A and B. Section A generated information on personal data of the respondents, while Section B had 16 items that were divided into three clusters for the three research questions. The researcher administered the instrument to the respondents with the help of two research assistants. The researcher employed the arithmetic mean to analyze the data. A threshold of 2.50 was set as the decision point due to the four-point scale utilized. This approach allowed the researcher to make informed judgment based on the collected data. The decision rule was that a mean score rating of 2.5 indicated agreement according to the respondents. Conversely, any mean score rating below 2.5 was considered as disagreement by the respondents.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the mean ratings on teachers' perceptions on how peer assessment technique encourages classroom learning activities in CRS?

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages classroom learning activities in CRS

With peer assessment technique in my class	$\overline{X}$	Remark
1. students like doing group work	3.41	Agree
2. students like reading one another's notes	3.56	Agree
3. students like engaging in group discussion	3.70	Agree
4. students improved their questioning capabilities	3.55	Agree
5. students developed competitive skills	3.33	Agree
6. students are motivated to engage with their textbooks more deeply	3.31	Agree

Table 1 shows that all the items received favourable responses that exceeded the 2.5 cut-off point. This indicates a positive trend among the respondents. The mean of the items indicate that peer assessment technique encourages classroom learning activities in CRS according to teachers' perceptions.

Research Question 2: What are the mean ratings on teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages student-to-student assessment in CRS?

Table 2 : Mean ratings of respondents on teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages student-to-student assessment in CRS

In my class students assess their peers by	$\overline{X}$	Remark
1. giving value judgment about their peers	3.20	Agree
2. scoring and grading their peers' assignments	3.03	Agree
3. engaging in interpersonal relationship	3.62	Agree
4. engaging in collaborative learning	3.85	Agree
5. commenting on their peers' creative work	3.25	Agree
6. learning through the diffusion of knowledge	3.03	Agree

Table 2 reveals that all the items received positive responses from the respondents. The mean scores for these items exceeded the established cut-off mean. This suggests a favourable trend in the data. This indicates that teachers' perception on peer assessment technique encourages students-to-student assessment is positive.

Research Question 3: What are the mean ratings on teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages student-to-teacher feedback in CRS?

Table 3 : Mean ratings of respondents on teachers' perception on how peer assessment technique encourages students-to-teacher feedback in CRS

In my class, students	$\overline{X}$	Remark
1. provide constructive feedback to me	3.29	Agree
2. communicate freely with me by asking relevant questions about the subject	3.25	Agree
3. listen to me by applying feedback after correction	3.74	Agree
4. motivate me to gain from the feedback which helps me to improve my teaching	3.96	Agree

Table 3 indicates that all the items received mean scores above the established cut-off point. This suggests a positive trend in the data, with respondents generally expressing favourable opinions that peer assessment technique encourages students-to-teacher feedback. This indicates that peer assessment encourages feedback from the students to the teacher.

Discussion

From the findings of research question one which sought to find out whether peer assessment technique encourages classroom learning activities in CRS, the result of the analysis revealed that peer assessment technique encourages classroom learning activities in CRS. The findings align with those from the study conducted by Double, McGrane & Hopfenbeck (2020) on both experimental and quasi-experimental studies to assess the impact of peer assessment on students across different educational levels and subject areas, revealed in their findings that peer assessment positively impacted students academic performance compared to scenarios where there was no assessment or only teacher assessment. Interestingly, the effect of peer assessment was like that of self-assessment. The result in table two shows that peer assessment technique encourages student-to-student assessment in CRS. When students assess one another with the assistance of the teacher, it helps them to value their peers and improve in their learning abilities. Lan & Fei (2015) noted that peer assessment

offers value by actively involving students in the learning process, fostering self-assessment, and promoting reflection. However, like any assessment method, it faces challenges. Peer pressure can make students uncomfortable when evaluating their peers' work, potentially impacting fairness. Additionally, the time and effort required for peer assessment demand commitment from both teachers and students. The findings in table three which sought to examine students-to-teacher feedback in CRS showed that peer assessment technique encourages students-to-teacher feedback in CRS. Students can give constructive feedback to the teacher, and students can communicate freely with the teacher by asking relevant questions about the subject.

Conclusion

The study's conclusions that were drawn from the research findings are that the peer assessment technique as perceived by teachers enhances the learning of CRS. Peer assessment gives students ample opportunity for critical, reflective, and constructive thinking in assessing their peers and themselves in the process of learning.

Recommendations

Drawing from the study's results, the following recommendations were put forth:

1.   Peer assessment technique is a formative assessment process that should be encouraged in secondary schools.

2. Peer assessment improves classroom learning activities

3. Peer assessment enhances students-to-student relationship

4. Peer assessment encourages feedback between the students and the teachers

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