



Determining the attitude of secondary school principals towards the implementation of school based assessment in Bayelsa state

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Abstract

The research sought to identify the perspectives of public secondary school principals regarding the application of school-based assessment in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. To guide the study, four research questions were formulated and one hypothesis was tested. The descriptive survey research approach was utilized. The study's population included 212 principals from public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A total of one hundred and seventy-four (174) school principals constituted the study's sample size since they were accessible to complete the online questionnaire. A systematic questionnaire, developed by the researchers, was utilized to gather data from the participants via an online Google Form. The questionnaire was validated by two specialists in Educational Measurement and Evaluation, along with one expert in Educational Administration. The Cronbach alpha method was employed to assess the reliability of the questionnaire, resulting in a value of 0.89, indicating that the questionnaire is dependable. The research questions were addressed using mean and standard deviation, while hypothesis one was tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics at the 0.05 significance level. The results showed that the public secondary school principals have a positive attitude towards school-based assessment. The research showed that insufficient training is among the difficulties encountered by secondary school principals in implementing the school-based assessment in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Additionally, a significant positive relationship existed between the educational background of secondary school principals and their perspectives on the implementation of school-based assessment. The study recommended that school principals should receive training on implementing school-based assessments in their instructions.

Keywords: Attitude, Secondary School, Principals, Implementation, School-Based Assessment

Introduction

Assessment is crucial in the educational process, acting as a means to evaluate student learning outcomes and direct teaching. School-Based Assessment (SBA) has become an essential approach in the worldwide educational arena, designed to offer a comprehensive evaluation of students by integrating both formative and summative assessments. School-Based Assessment (SBA) in Nigeria has become a crucial element of the educational framework, focusing on ongoing assessment conducted by teachers in classroom environments. In contrast to conventional summative evaluations, SBA includes formative assessments carried out during the school year, facilitating more comprehensive feedback and modifications to address student requirements. The main objective of SBA in Nigeria is to enhance student learning through ongoing assessment of academic performance, offering prompt feedback, and enabling teachers to adapt their teaching methods to boost educational results. This method is advantageous in developing abilities beyond simple memorization, like critical thinking and problem-solving, which correspond with national educational objectives (Essien, 2023) ^[6]. As stated by Egwu (2020) ^[4], SBA provides a more contextually relevant and genuine method for assessing student performance, taking into account the local educational setting and encouraging assessments led by teachers.

The Nigerian educational framework, outlined in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria,

2023) ^[7], acknowledges SBA as a vital component for enhancing teaching and learning results. The policy requires secondary school principals and teachers to include ongoing assessments in their teaching methods. Principals hold an essential leadership position in guaranteeing the effective execution of SBA. Their perspectives and beliefs greatly affect teachers' commitment and the overall efficiency of the assessment system. The attitudes of secondary school principals in Nigeria regarding School-Based Assessment (SBA) are influenced by several factors, such as their comprehension of SBA's objectives, the resources at their disposal, and their roles in leadership. SBA aims to merge assessment with everyday teaching and learning, enabling teachers to assess students' performance in a more comprehensive and ongoing way, instead of depending exclusively on high-stakes tests. Nonetheless, although principals typically acknowledge the possible advantages of SBA, various challenges affect their perceptions and practices of implementation.

A crucial element influencing principals' attitudes is their degree of readiness and comprehension of SBA's procedures. Numerous principals in Nigeria do not have formal training in educational assessment methods, resulting in uncertainty regarding the effective implementation of SBA. This deficiency in training also hampers their capability to assist teachers in enhancing SBA skills, thereby influencing the quality of execution in schools (Obioma, Junaidu & Ajagun, 2013) ^[11]. Additionally, principals frequently encounter resource-related challenges

that influence their perspective on SBA. Insufficient access to teaching resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of government assistance can hinder principals from creating the essential conditions for SBA. The absence of support could lead to resistance or indifferent attitudes from principals, who might see SBA as merely an extra administrative load instead of a valuable resource for enhancing education (Olujuwon & Omiyale, 2021) ^[12]. Research conducted by Akpan and Ugo (2019) ^[2] showed that numerous school principals in Nigeria face difficulties in implementing SBA because of insufficient training, resource shortages, and minimal support from educational authorities.

Studies show that favorable attitudes from school principals correlate with heightened motivation in teachers and enhanced student outcomes (Obi & Okon, 2021) ^[10, 11]. In contrast, principals with unfavorable opinions about SBA might impede its implementation since they may not prioritize essential training and resources for educators. In Bayelsa State, a distinct combination of geographical and socioeconomic issues intensifies these challenges, featuring elevated poverty levels, recurrent flooding, and restricted availability of professional development opportunities (Ebiye, 2022) ^[3]. Bayelsa State, situated in Nigeria's Niger Delta area, encounters significant educational challenges that could influence school principals' perspectives on SBA. The state's rural and riverbank characteristics create logistical challenges in conducting ongoing assessments and arranging consistent training sessions for teachers. Additionally, the challenge of accountability and the pressure from stakeholders to succeed in critical national exams might cause principals to hesitate in fully adopting SBA practices (Idowu, 2018) ^[8].

The educational credentials of school principals are acknowledged as an essential factor affecting their leadership effectiveness and perspectives on different pedagogical innovations, including School-Based Assessment (SBA). A research conducted by Ebiye (2022) ^[3] emphasized that the educational system in Bayelsa State is facing considerable strain due to elements like insufficient resources, inadequate infrastructure, and regular interruptions stemming from environmental issues. These elements, along with the diverse educational experiences of school leaders, might influence how principals understand and apply SBA in their schools. Additionally, studies indicate that school leaders possessing advanced educational credentials are more inclined to participate in ongoing professional development and keep up-to-date with effective practices in educational assessment (Akpan & Ugo, 2019) ^[2]. Such principals are more capable of offering instructional guidance, assisting teachers, and fostering an environment suitable for SBA execution. Conversely, principals who possess fewer educational qualifications might not have the confidence or skills needed to effectively lead the SBA process. Consequently, the degree of assistance and direction offered to educators in executing SBA can differ greatly, impacting the overall effectiveness of the assessment system. Idowu (2018) ^[8] suggests that educational leaders who possess higher levels of academic training are more inclined to understand the theoretical foundations of SBA, acknowledge its possible advantages for student learning, and promote its incorporation into everyday teaching methods.

A recent study suggests that principals possessing higher educational qualifications generally display more favorable attitudes toward SBA. These leaders frequently have a more profound comprehension of assessment methods and educational policies, allowing them to execute SBA efficiently in their institutions (Olujuwon & Omiyale, 2021) ^[12]. This discovery aligns with extensive studies that link the educational backgrounds of school leaders to their success in enhancing teaching and learning conditions. Furthermore, studies in different areas of Nigeria have revealed that the qualifications of principals influence their leadership approach and the assistance they give to teachers, which ultimately impacts student outcomes. For example, research indicates that capable principals tend to participate more in professional development programs for teachers, which directly impacts the effective execution of assessment methods (Ikenga & Ogbaga, 2021) ^[9]. Their capacity to create supportive atmospheres motivates educators to embrace innovative assessment methods, thereby improving the quality of education.

This research aims to determine the perspectives of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State regarding the implementation of SBA. Gaining insight into these attitudes will illuminate the obstacles and enablers of SBA practices, consequently guiding policies and intervention strategies to improve assessment systems in the area. Considering the importance of principals in leading educational change, a thorough examination of their perspectives and the elements shaping their attitudes is essential for creating focused support systems that will enhance SBA implementation.

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of School-Based Assessment (SBA) in Nigeria, as proposed by the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2023) ^[7], was established to facilitate a more equitable and ongoing evaluation of students' learning. In contrast to conventional approaches that focus on final exams at the end of a term or year, SBA promotes the use of formative assessments, which enhance student learning by providing feedback and continuous evaluation. Although its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning outcomes is well established, the implementation of SBA has encountered considerable challenges in different areas, including Bayelsa State. Bayelsa State, known for its distinct geographical and socioeconomic conditions, offers a notably difficult setting for the effective implementation of SBA. Numerous secondary school principals in this area are anticipated to take a crucial role in promoting SBA and supporting teachers during the implementation phase. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence and a few initial studies indicate that the views of these principals regarding SBA might not consistently be favorable. Ebiye (2022) ^[3] reports that many principals in Bayelsa State perceive SBA as an extra load instead of a beneficial educational advancement. This unfavorable perception can be linked to several factors, such as insufficient training, poor infrastructure, inadequate administrative backing, and the stress to achieve excellent results in external assessments.

The issue of insufficient professional development options for principals has been extensively documented. Akpan and Ugo (2019) ^[2] emphasized that many school administrators in Nigeria, particularly in Bayelsa State, face restricted access to training initiatives that could provide them with

essential skills and knowledge for successful SBA execution. This deficiency in training frequently leads to an insufficient comprehension of the advantages and best practices related to SBA, which further leads to resistance and ineffective implementation. As a result, educators might also feel unmotivated to perform routine assessments, and pupils may miss out on the intended ongoing feedback regarding their learning advancement. Another significant factor that influences principals' perspectives on SBA in Bayelsa State is the state's infrastructural difficulties. The rural and riverine characteristics of Bayelsa intensify issues like inadequate road systems, restricted internet connectivity, and recurring floods, which complicate the administration of SBA (Ebiye, 2022) [2]. Under these circumstances, principals might view the assessment framework as unfeasible or unworkable. Additionally, there is a significant pressure on school administrators to concentrate on critical external assessments, like the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Idowu (2018) [8] noted that this pressure forces principals to focus more resources and effort on readying students for national exams, which negatively impacts SBA initiatives. Considering the vital role of school principals in leading education and their ability to impact teachers and general school policy, it is important to examine their perspectives on SBA. Studies indicate that without the support and dedication of school leaders, SBA cannot be effectively incorporated into the educational system (Obi & Okon, 2021) [10, 11]. Consequently, the views of secondary school principals are not solely based on individual beliefs but are influenced by systemic and contextual elements that require thorough exploration. The issue is that the perspectives of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State concerning the execution of SBA are still not well comprehended or sufficiently tackled. If these perspectives are mainly negative or mixed, it may result in less effective execution of SBA, ultimately compromising the policy's aim of promoting comprehensive and ongoing student evaluation. This study aims to explore the perspectives of secondary school principals regarding SBA in Bayelsa State, analyze the factors influencing these perspectives, and suggest strategies to enhance effective implementation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the perspectives of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State regarding the implementation of SBA. Specifically, the study finds out the:

1. Attitudes of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State towards the implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA).
2. Factors influence the attitudes of secondary school principals towards SBA implementation in Bayelsa State.
3. Challenges do secondary school principals face in implementing SBA in Bayelsa State.
4. Relationship between the educational qualification of secondary school principals and attitudes of secondary school principals towards SBA implementation

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the attitudes of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State towards the implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA)?

2. What factors influence the attitudes of secondary school principals towards SBA implementation in Bayelsa State?
3. What challenges do secondary school principals face in implementing SBA in Bayelsa State?
4. Is there relationship between the educational qualification of secondary school principals and attitudes of secondary school principals towards SBA implementation?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significant level:

1. Educational qualifications of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria do not significantly influence their attitudes towards SBA implementation.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research method was utilized. The study's population consisted of 212 principals from public secondary schools located in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study's sample size consisted of one hundred and seventy-four public secondary school principals who were able to complete the online questionnaire. A structured questionnaire constructed by the researchers was utilized to gather data from the participants via an online Google Form. The questionnaire was validated by two specialists in Educational Measurement and Evaluation, along with one expert in Educational Administration. The reliability of the instrument was estimated using the Cronbach alpha technique, resulting in a value of 0.89, indicating that the instrument is reliable. Mean and standard deviation were utilized to address the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was employed to examine hypothesis one at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Gender of the Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	93	53%
Female	81	47%
Total	174	100%

Table 1 shows that majority of the participants are male and they are 93 (53%), while females are 81 (47%). The information is represented in the diagram below:

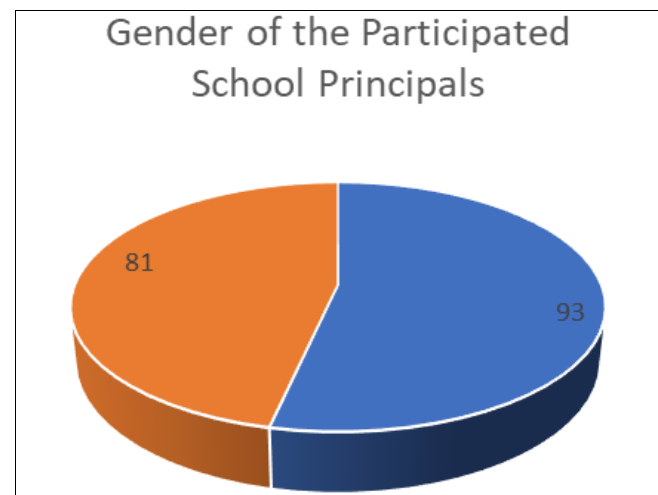


Fig 1: Gender of the Participated School Principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Table 2: Highest Educational Qualification of the Participants

Highest Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
B.Ed.	63	36%
M.Ed.	103	59%
Ph.D.	8	5%
Total	174	100%

Table 2 shows the highest educational qualifications of the participants. Table 2 shows that 103 participant (59%) has M.Ed. as their highest educational qualification, followed by 63 participants (36%) with B.Ed., while 8 (5%) has P.hD. as their highest educational qualification. The information is shown in the diagram below:

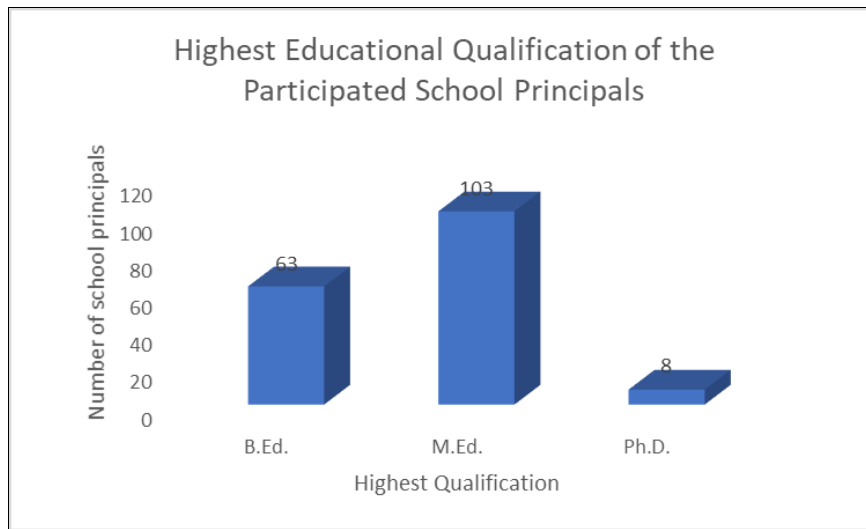


Fig 2: Highest Qualifications of the Participated School Principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Research Question One: What are the attitudes of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State towards the implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA)?

Table 3: Attitudes of Secondary School Principals in Bayelsa State towards the Implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA)

S/N	Attitudes towards SBA Implementation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	I believe that SBA is an effective method for assessing students’ academic performance.	3.48	0.72	Positive
2	SBA provides a more comprehensive evaluation of students compared to traditional examinations.	3.65	0.65	Positive
3	Implementing SBA requires too much time and effort from school principals.	3.92	0.37	Positive
4	SBA enhances student learning and engagement.	3.73	0.62	Positive
5	I feel adequately trained to oversee the implementation of SBA in my school.	2.09	1.12	Negative
6	The government provides sufficient support and resources for SBA implementation.	1.55	0.72	Negative
7	Teachers in my school are willing to adopt SBA practices.	3.87	0.39	Positive
8	The pressure to perform well in national exams discourages the implementation of SBA.	3.71	0.64	Positive
9	I find it challenging to balance SBA implementation with other administrative duties.	3.71	0.66	Positive
10	I am committed to promoting SBA practices in my school.	3.75	0.61	Positive
	Grand Mean	3.35	0.65	Positive

Table 3 shows the the attitudes of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State towards the implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA). The results in table 3 shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 10 have mean values greater than criterion mean value of 2.5, which shows that the school principals have positive attitudes in those items, while the school principals disagreed that they feel adequately trained to oversee the implementation of SBA in their schools; and the government provides sufficient support and resources for SBA implementation respectively.

The results also showed that the grand mean of 3.35 exceeds the criterion mean value of 2.5. This suggests that participated public secondary school principals in this study have positive attitude towards school-based assessment. This implies that principals are consistently prepared to implement SBA.

Research Question Two: What factors influence the attitudes of secondary school principals towards SBA implementation in Bayelsa State?

Table 4: Factors Influencing the Attitudes of Secondary School Principals towards SBA Implementation in Bayelsa State

S/N	Factors affecting attitudes	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Availability of training and professional development programs	3.69	0.67
2	Availability of teaching and learning resources	3.72	0.69
3	Support from the Ministry of Education	3.67	0.68
4	Support from parents and the local community	3.92	0.39
5	Teachers' attitudes and readiness to implement SBA	3.64	0.58
6	Personal beliefs and perceptions about SBA	3.74	0.57
7	The school’s infrastructure and facilities	3.85	0.41

Table 4 shows the mean responses of the participants on the factors that influence the attitudes of secondary school principals towards SBA implementation in Bayelsa State. Table 4 shows that the factors that influence the attitudes of secondary school principals towards SBA implementation in Bayelsa State are: availability of training and professional development programs; availability of teaching and learning resources, support from the Ministry of Education, support

from parents and the local community, teachers' attitudes and readiness to implement SBA, personal beliefs and perceptions about SBA, and the school's infrastructure and facilities.

Research Question Three: What challenges do secondary school principals face in implementing SBA in Bayelsa State?

Table 5: Challenges that Secondary School Principals Face in implementing SBA in Bayelsa State

S/N	Challenges in implementing SBA	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Lack of adequate training	3.67	0.59
2	Insufficient resources (e.g., materials, funding)	3.58	0.74
3	Resistance from teachers	3.79	0.56
4	Pressure to focus on national exams	3.24	0.88
5	Lack of parental support	3.46	0.85
6	Poor infrastructure and logistics	3.89	0.38
7	High administrative workload	3.84	0.41

Table 5 shows the perception of the participants towards the challenges they face in implementing SBA in Bayelsa State. Table 5 shows that the challenges that face the school principals in implementing SBA are lack of adequate training; insufficient resources (e.g., materials, funding); resistance from teachers; pressure to focus on national exams; lack of parental support; poor infrastructure and logistics; and high administrative workload.

Research question four was hypothesized as follows: 'Educational qualifications of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria do not significantly influence their attitudes towards SBA implementation'.

Hypothesis One: Educational qualifications of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria do not significantly influence their attitudes towards SBA implementation.

Table 6: Correlation Statistics of the Influence of Educational Qualifications of Secondary School Principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria on their Attitudes towards SBA Implementation

Variable	N	r	p-value
Educational Qualification of School Principals	174	0.75	0.000
Attitudes of school Principals towards SBA implementation			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 6 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation between the educational qualifications of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria and their attitudes towards SBA implementation. Table 6 shows the correlation coefficient of 0.75, which signifies a positive high relationship between educational qualification of school principals and their attitudes towards SBA implementation. Table 6 shows the p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at 0.05 significance level, the p-value (0.000) is less than the alpha value of 0.05, this means that there is a significant difference. Conclusively, educational qualifications of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria do significantly influence their attitudes towards SBA implementation.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the first research question indicated that school principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, hold positive views regarding the implementation of School-Based

Assessment. They acknowledge that SBA is an effective method for assessing students' academic performance, provides a more comprehensive evaluation of students compared to traditional examinations, and enhances student learning and engagement. School principals that grasp the educational foundation of SBA tend to be more supportive, motivating teachers to meaningfully incorporate SBA practices in their classrooms. The results of this study align with those of Akpan and Etor (2020) [1], who indicated that principals trained in SBA are more likely to advocate for its use, viewing it as a means to improve instructional quality and keep students consistently involved in learning. The results of this study contradict the conclusions reached by Oribhabor and Aituariagbon (2019) [14], who investigated the factors affecting the effective implementation of school-based assessments in public junior secondary schools in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, and found a negative attitude of school management towards school-based assessments.

Findings from the second research question indicated that the factors perceived by school principals in Bayelsa State that influence the implementation of school-based assessment include: the presence of training and professional development programs; the availability of teaching and learning resources; assistance from the Ministry of Education; backing from parents and the local community; teachers' readiness and attitudes towards implementing SBA; personal beliefs and views regarding SBA; and the infrastructure and facilities of the school. The results of this research align with those of Obioma, Junaidu, and Ajagun (2013) [11], who demonstrated that principals trained in assessment practices tend to value the advantages of SBA, such as delivering continuous feedback and facilitating individualized learning methods. When principals do not receive this training, they might consider SBA difficult and may opt for conventional examination methods that correspond with their training experiences. Adewuyi and Adeniran (2021) [5] disclosed that school principals with restricted access to resources like assessment tools, materials, and technological assistance might perceive SBA as an overwhelming extra load, potentially fostering negative or apathetic attitudes toward its execution. On the other hand, principals at well-equipped schools often provide greater support, as they possess the necessary resources to effectively carry out SBA.

Additionally, the results from research question two indicated that the extent of support and guidance offered by educational authorities influences principals' attitudes as well. Well-defined policy guidelines, oversight, and steady backing from senior authorities can greatly boost principals' assurance in embracing SBA. When school leaders sense they have the support of educational authorities, they are more inclined to regard SBA favorably, as they see it as an acknowledged and endorsed form of assessment. The results of this research align with the conclusions of Omorogiuwa and Aibangbee (2017) ^[13], who discovered that teachers' awareness of school-based assessment and the attitudes of school management towards it were factors seen to adversely impact the successful execution of school-based assessment in secondary schools within the Benin metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.

Result from research question three revealed that lack of adequate training, insufficient resources, resistance from teachers, pressure to focus on national exams, lack of parental support, poor infrastructure and logistics, and high administrative workload are their perceived challenges that influence the implementation of SBA. The results of this research align with the discoveries of Akpan and Ugo (2019) ^[2], who emphasized that a key challenge for school leaders in executing effective SBA is lack of access to training programs, whereas (Ebiye, 2022) ^[3] indicated that inadequate road infrastructure, restricted internet connectivity, and regular flooding complicate the management of SBA.

Findings from hypothesis one indicated a positive significant relationship between secondary school principals' educational qualifications and their attitudes toward SBA implementation. The educational backgrounds of secondary school principals significantly influence their perspectives on effectively implementing school-based assessments (SBA). Principals holding advanced degrees, particularly those who have engaged in specialized training for educational leadership, typically possess a more optimistic view of SBA. This is mainly due to their educational background, which provides them with a greater comprehension of assessment practices, their objectives, and their possible advantages for student learning. Studies indicate that principals possessing advanced qualifications and specialized leadership training are more inclined to endorse formative assessments as components of SBA, perceiving these methods as instruments to improve learning instead of simply for accountability. For example, research on New Zealand's school assessment systems revealed that principals and educators experienced in educational assessment excelled in balancing formative (continuous, learning-centered) and summative (evaluative) components of assessment. This equilibrium fosters a learning atmosphere where evaluations serve not only to measure academic success but also to guide teaching methods, resulting in deeper outcomes for learners (Yates & Johnston, 2018) ^[16].

Moreover, principals who possess robust educational experiences in leadership are more likely to motivate teachers to utilize assessment data for recognizing student needs and modifying instruction, in line with a transformational leadership model. This kind of leadership has been demonstrated to promote a favorable school environment in which teachers feel encouraged and inspired to participate actively in SBA, ultimately enhancing

students' educational experiences (Prabhakar, Sideridis & Alghamdi, 2024) ^[15]. Consequently, the skills and education of principals are vital, as they affect not just their own mindsets but also their assistance for educators in applying assessment methods that promote enhancement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the attitudes of secondary school principals in Bayelsa State towards the implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA) is positive, and there is a significant relationship between the educational qualification of secondary school principals and attitudes of secondary school principals towards SBA implementation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommended that

1. The Government ought to fund extensive training in school-based assessment (SBA) for secondary school principals and teachers, thereby providing them with the skills required to implement SBA effectively.
2. The government must provide resources to schools to meet the logistical requirements of SBA.
3. The Government and stakeholders ought to strive for cultural changes that prioritize formative assessment instead of solely relying on summative measures, facilitating a shift in perspectives within educational communities.
4. Administrative burdens can be alleviated by offering more support staff or technology for data management, helping to lessen the strain on principals and enabling them to concentrate more on instructional leadership.

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