

## Best Practices and Experiences in Soft Skills Assessment in Oyo Town, Oyo State Schools

Esther O. Durowoju & Adams O. U. Onuka

Institute of Education  
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

**Corresponding Author: Esther O. Durowoju**

---

### Abstract

This study investigated the best practices in assessing students' soft skills and the personal experiences of teachers in assessing the soft skills of students. The population of the study consisted of all teachers in Oyo town, Oyo state, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in the study. Two Local Government Areas (Atiba and Oyo West) were randomly selected from the four LGAs in Oyo town. Furthermore, ten public schools were equally randomly chosen from each of the two LGAs and from each school 15 teachers were randomly sampled, making a total of 20 schools and 300 teachers. An instrument titled "Best Practices in and Experiences in Assessing Soft Skills Scale" developed by the researchers was validated using Cronbach Alpha, which gave reliability coefficient of 0.74 and 0.78 respectively. Three research questions and two hypotheses were answered and tested using descriptive statistics and t-test respectively. Results showed that 15% of the teachers had M.Ed, 70% B.Ed, 10% of them had PGDE while 5% had NCE. Teachers' years of experiences were as follows: below 9 years 22%, 10- 18years 48%, 19 – 27years 19% and 28years and above 11%. The result also revealed that the best practices in assessing students' soft skill as perceived by the teachers were the combination of direct and indirect assessment methods. Most of the teachers in the study agreed that from their experiences, students' some soft skills were rarely and not easy to assess. Lastly, there was no significance difference between male and female teachers' perception of the best practices and experiences in soft skill assessment respectively. Recommendations included: orientation for teachers in soft skill assessment should be organized from time to time to enable them acquire necessary skills for assessing students' soft skills which will add to their experiences in soft skills assessment as well as improve their proficiency in doing it.

---

**Keywords:** best practices, teachers' experiences, teachers' perception and soft skills assessment

---

### INTRODUCTION

Assessment of students' performance is one of the pillars upon which the education system of every nation is resting on. According to the National Policy on Education document (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013), assessment of students' performance is germane to determine the extent to which educational goals and objectives have been achieved (FRN, 2013). In other words, without assessment, it is practically impossible to ascertain whether all the resources (fund, material and manpower) expended on imparting knowledge into the students in a bid to promote national development have been rewarding. Looking through the content of the school curriculum for Early Childhood Care Development and Education, Kindergarten Education, Primary Education, Junior and Secondary Education, and Tertiary Education; teaching and assessment of students' performance focus mainly on hard skills development. To buttress this, LaFrance (n.d.) asserted that schools engage in the business of teaching reading, writing, science, mathematics and other "hard" skills that are both essential and valuable to performing well on the job after they graduate from school. Schools also help students acquire the practical skills needed to find jobs and provide

internships so that students can learn more about various fields of human endeavour. However, research studies have shown that in spite of the quantum of hard skills normally acquired by graduates, majority of them are unable to secure job because these career seekers often lack soft skills which most organisations expect their employees to clearly exhibit (Aworanti, 2014).

LaFrance (n.d.) stated that 'soft skills' is a simple term for a complex system of innate traits and habits commonly sought for by employers. Onabamiro, Onuka and Oyekanmi (2014) referred to soft skills as behavioral competencies, interpersonal skills, people-centred skills or personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects. Soft skills are personal characteristics or qualities an individual possess which enable him to relate well with people in any organisation: be it family, workplace, religious setting, or the society at large. It is apparent that every organisation is interested in retaining employees who possess both hard skills and soft skills in their employ. Obviously, soft skills complement hard skills and are thus, occupational requirements for any job and several other activities in the society. It is believed that any

graduate or employee who cannot get along with others and/or does not have positive attitude, cannot work well as part of a team, and is not able to think creatively and critically cannot fit well into a workplace; no matter how much talented he/she is or how physically skilled he/she may be. The reason why every organisation seeks for graduates who possess soft skills in addition to possessing hard skills is to ensure amity among its employees as well as ensure enabling for creativity and innovation.

Most employers have often admitted that though they can teach their employees how to perform certain tasks but that they are unable to teach them how to cultivate a good attitude or common sense (LaFrance, n.d.). Though it is generally believed that soft skills are inborn skills but a close examination of these skills could suggest otherwise. Though, some people naturally exhibit soft skills; the skills can also be taught, acquired, nurtured and assessed over time. Examples of soft skills include confidence building, flexibility, honesty, and integrity, the ability to see things from different perspectives, optimism and common sense. The most sought after and popular soft skills include problem solving, thinking inventively or creativity, the ability to compromise, negotiate and persuade, the ability to mentor, teach, communicate, network and engaging in public speaking. Other such skills include the ability to follow directions - even when they are unspoken; understanding what needs to be done and doing it, having good manners and being courteous, seeking out opportunities for continuing education, doing a job thoroughly and correctly and the ability to admit errors and correct mistakes (LaFrance, n.d.; Onuka, Durowoju & Onabamiro, 2014).

As education is meant to develop every individual to become a 'total man' (someone who possesses both hard and soft skills), teachers should not only teach and assess students' hard skills but should also teach and assess students' soft skills. Research has shown that despite the fact that teaching and assessing soft skills has become a common place in the Western world, they are yet to be embraced in African school setting including Nigeria. Aworanti (2014) asserted that some African scholars see soft skills as too inherent to be examined while others believe they are not examinable. In the same vein, Asuru and Ogidi (2013) found that some of the challenges of assessing soft skill include teacher incompetency, poor knowledge of test construction and lack of knowledge of how to properly assess soft skills. Researchers have found that teachers who are the major stakeholders and assessors of students' performance have divergent opinions on the assessment of students' soft skills.

For instance, Wemael and Dar es (2014) reported that teachers agreed that special programmes should be

introduced to students about the soft skills and at the end the students should be given separate examination and certificate. They further submitted that if teachers were mandated to give continuous assessment of cognitively teachable subjects, they can also be trusted to give continuous assessment for the personal traits and at the end of the course certificates can be awarded by the National Examination Council of Tanzania. Onabamiro, Onuka and Oyekanmi (2014) in their study found that almost 70% of the teacher participants in the study agreed that soft skills can be assessed while others disagreed. In the same vein, almost 66% of the students who participated in study agreed that soft skills can be assessed while others disagreed. In the study carried out by Aworanti (2014), only five soft skills out of the identified ten, modified and validated soft skills are suitable to be examined in the Nigerian context. The five soft skills include commitment to duty, attending to responsibilities, adaptability, resources management skills and motivation.

Since research has established that assessment of soft skills is as important as hard skills and one of the challenges of soft skills assessment in schools has to do with determining the appropriate methods for assessing soft skills it becomes imperative to examine the appropriate methods for assessing soft skills. Assessment of students' performance consists of wide variety of methods which include teacher-made tests, standardized tests, oral questions, projects, hands-on or practical tests, oral quizzes or examination, direct classroom observations, questionnaires, interview, self-report inventories, observation, anecdotal records, attitudinal scale, interest scale/inventory, checklist, socio-metric and anecdotal techniques among others (Durowoju, 2014; Onuka, 2010). These methods can also be used to assess students' soft skills because soft skills include individual's attitudes, habits and how they interact with other people. These assessment methods can be grouped into three: direct, indirect, and combination of direct and indirect method of assessment. Direct methods of assessing soft skills include: teacher-made tests, standardized tests, oral questions, projects, practical tests, oral quizzes or examination. Indirect methods include: classroom observations, questionnaires, interview, self-report inventories, anecdotal records, socio-metric techniques, attitudinal scale, interest scale/inventory, checklist, and anecdotal combination of direct and indirect method involve all the methods in the two groups (direct and indirect). Dewson, Eccles, Tackey and Jackson (2000) cited in Onabamiro, Onuka and Oyekanmi (2014) stated that there are several and varied methods to assess soft skills, one system will not suit all. What may work well for a particular situation and institute may not work for another.

It, therefore, becomes imperative to find out the best methods or practices adopted by teachers in assessing students' soft skills and their experiences in conducting the assessment in their schools. It is in the light of the foregoing that this study investigated the best practices and experiences of teachers in soft skills assessment in Secondary schools in Oyo town, Oyo State, Nigeria. Some of the soft skills considered in this study include good manners, respect, honesty and integrity, adaptability, problem solving- ability to see things from a different perspective and effective communication among others.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the profile of the respondents in this study (years of experience and qualifications)?
2. What is the teachers' perception of the best practices in soft skill assessment?
3. What is the teachers' experience in soft skill assessment?

**HYPOTHESES**

- H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significance difference between teachers' perception of the best practices in soft skill assessment on gender basis
- H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significance difference between teachers' experiences in soft skill assessment on gender basis

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

The study adopted an expost-facto type because the researchers did not manipulate any of the independent variables.

**Population**

The population of the study consisted of all teachers in Oyo, Oyo state, Nigeria.

**Sampling technique and sample**

Multi-stage sampling technique was used. Two Local Government Areas (Atiba and Oyo West) were randomly selected from the four LGAs in Oyo town. Furthermore, ten public schools were equally randomly chosen from each of the two LGAs and from each school 15 teachers were randomly chosen, making a total of 20 schools and 300 teachers.

**Instrumentation**

One instrument tagged "Best Practices in and Experiences of Assessing Soft Skills Scale" developed by the researchers. The instrument was divided into three sections. Section A consisted of information that elicited the bio-data of the respondents. Section B comprised items that elicited teachers' perceptions of the best practices for measuring students' soft skills while Section C consisted of items that elicited teachers' experiences in assessing students' soft skills. The instrument was validated using Cronbach Alpha which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.74 while the Lawshe's

Content Validity Ratio was used to measure its content validity given a ratio of 0.78.

**Procedure for data collection**

The researchers trained four research assistants who participated in data collection. The researchers and the research assistants gave the questionnaires to the respondents and detailed information about the questionnaires to the respondents. After the administration of the instruments, one of the researchers and the assistants collected the completed instruments for data collation, scoring and analysis.

**Scoring of the instrument**

The instrument consisted of two response format. The response format for section A was as follows:

**DA** = Direct Assessment which involved the teacher-made tests, standardized tests, oral questions, projects, practical tests and oral quizzes

**ID** = Indirect Assessment which involved the use of observations, interview, self-report inventories, anecdotal records, socio-metric, checklist, and anecdotal.

**CDI** = Combination of Direct and Indirect Assessment which involved teacher-made tests, standardized tests, oral questions, projects, practical tests and oral quizzes, observations, interview, self-report inventories, anecdotal records, socio-metric, checklist, and anecdotal.

**NMA** = No method is applicable

**Scoring:** CDI = 4, ID = 3, DA = 2 and NMA = 1

The response format for section B goes thus:

**AVEA** = Always and Very Easy to Assess

**OEA** = Often and Easy to Assess

**RNEA** = Rarely and Not Easy to Assess,

**CAA** = Cannot be Assessed at All

**Scoring:** AVEA = 4, OEA = 3, RNEA = 2, CAA = 1

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Data for this study were analysed using descriptive and t-test statistics.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Research Question 1a:** What is the profile of the respondents in this study (years of experience)?

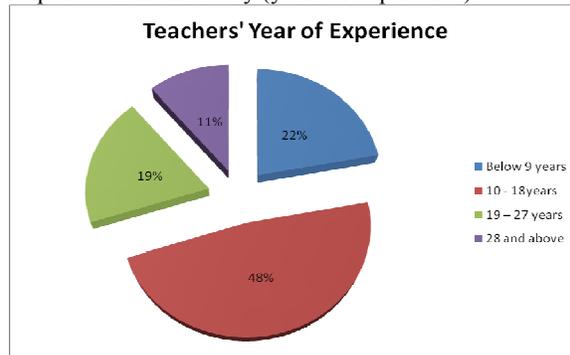


Fig. 1: The profile of the respondents in this study (years of experience)

From Fig. 1, the result revealed that the years of experiences of 22% (66) of the teachers were below 9years while 48% (144) of them had between 10 – 18years of teaching experience. In addition, 19% (57) of the teachers had 19 – 27years of teaching experience and 11% (33) of them had 28 and above teaching experience. From this result, 78% of the teachers’ years of teaching were above 9years. This result corroborates the findings of Etsey and Abu (2013), who found that the years of experience of majority of the tutors examined was 9years and above. This implies that the majority of the teachers are expected to have acquired the necessary skills for assessing students’ performance especially in soft skills.

**Research Question 1b:** What is the profile of the respondents in this study (qualifications)?

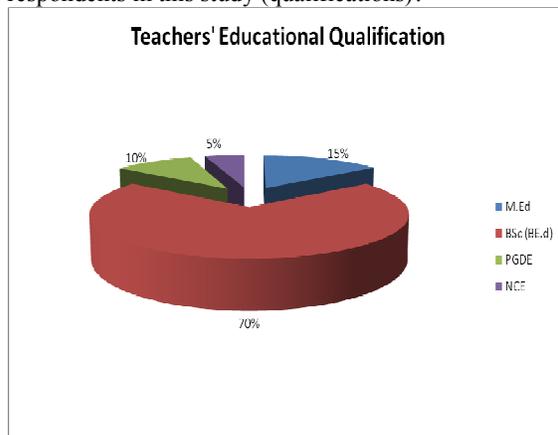


Fig. 2: The profile of the respondents in this study (qualifications)

The result in Fig. 2 showed that 15% (45) of the teachers had Masters Degree in Education, 70% (210) had Bachelor degree in Education. Furthermore, 10% (30) of the teachers had Post Graduate Diploma in Education while 5% (15) of them had National Certificate in Education. From this finding, 95% of the teachers had the highest qualification required by the Ministry of Education to qualify anyone to teach in the secondary school. This result is in consonance with the findings of Oladokun (2009) who found that teachers’ qualification is one of the most potent contributors among the variables in his study that predicted students’ achievement in Mathematics. The implication of the result of this study, is that virtually all the teachers in study are not only qualified but they were professionally trained.

**Research Question 2:** What is the teachers’ perception of the best practices in soft skill assessment?

From the figure, teachers’ perception of the best practices or methods of assessing soft skills were presented. The result revealed that 67.4% of the teachers perceived indirect assessment (ID) [i.e. use of observations, interview, self-report inventories, anecdotal records, socio-metric, checklist, and anecdotal] most suitable for assessing good manners while 21.3% perceived that combination of direct and indirect (CDI) method of assessment is appropriate for assessing the soft skill.

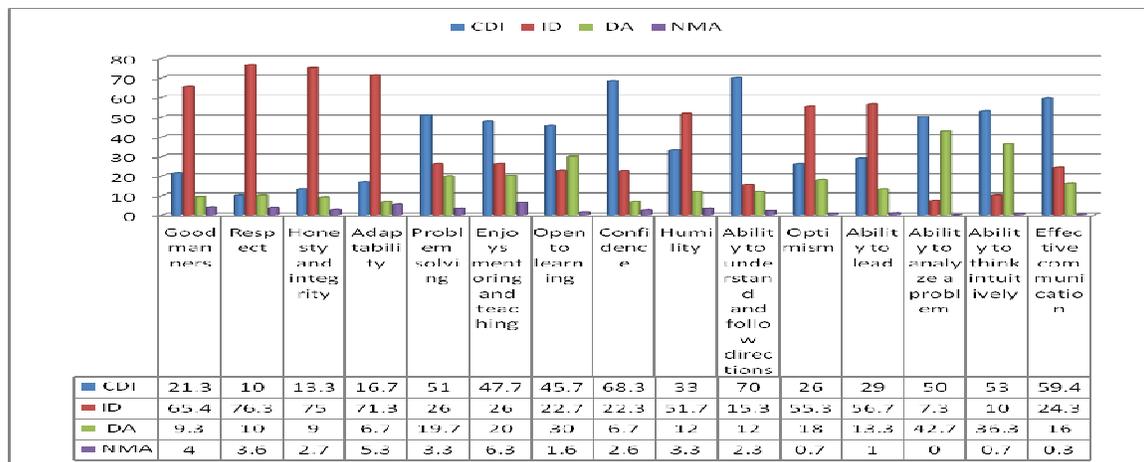


Fig. 3: The teachers’ perception of the best practices in soft skill assessment

76.3% and 75% of the teachers perceived ID is most appropriate for assessing respect; and honesty and integrity respectively. On the other hand, 10% and 13.3% of the respondents perceived that ID is appropriate for assessing respect; and honesty and

integrity respectively. The method most suitable for assessing adaptability as perceived by 71.3% of the teachers was ID while 13.3% claimed that CDI was appropriate. 51% of the teachers perceived that CDI

is the best method for assessing problem solving but 26% of them submitted that ID is more appropriate.

Furthermore, 47.7%, 45.7%, 68.3% 70%, 50%, 53% and 59.4% of the teachers perceived that CDI method of assessment is the best practice or method for assessing the following soft skills: enjoying mentoring and teaching, open to learning, confidence, ability to understand and follow directions, ability to analyse a problem, ability to think intuitively and effective communication respectively. One the contrary, 26%, 22.7%, 22.3%, 15.3%, and 24.3% of the teachers submitted that ID is more appropriate for assessing the these soft skills: enjoys mentoring and teaching, open to learning, confidence, ability to understand and follow directions and effective communication respectively while 42.7% and 36.3% of them perceived that direct assessment (DA) [use of teacher-made tests, standardized tests, oral questions, projects, practical tests and oral quizzes] is more appropriate for assessing ability to analyse problem and ability to think intuitively in that order. Finally,

51.7%, 55.3% and 56.7% of the teachers perceived that ID is the most appropriate method for assessing these soft skills: humility, optimism and ability to lead respectively while 33%, 26% and 29% of them perceived that CDI is more appropriate.

The above result corroborates the assertion of Dewson, Eccles, Tackey and Jackson (2000) cited in Onabamiro, Onuka and Oyekanmi (2014) that there are several and varied methods to assess soft skills, one system will not suit all. It must be noted that the differences observed between the perception rates of the teachers on the best practice or method of assessing soft skills could be attributed to the teachers' level of academic qualification. To support this, almost 85% of the teachers had Bachelor degree in Education while 15% of them had Masters Degree in Education as addition qualification. This implies that the teachers agreed that varied assessment methods are vital in assessing students' soft skills

**Q3. What is the teachers' experience in soft skill assessment?**

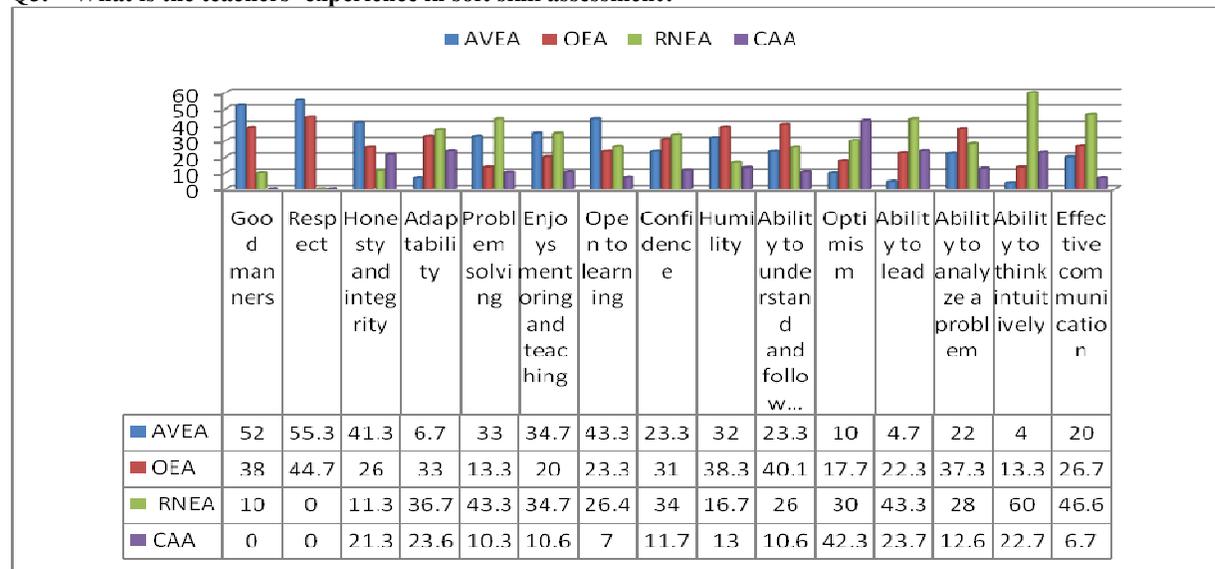


Fig. 4: The teachers' experiences in soft skill assessment

From the table, teachers' experiences in soft skills assessment were presented. The result showed that 52% of the teachers expressed that good manners is always very easy to assess while 38% of them agreed that it is often easy to asses. In the same, 55.3%, 41.3% and 43.3% of the teachers agreed that respect, honesty and integrity, and open to learning are always very easy to asses while 44.7%, 26% and 23.3% expressed that the soft skills are often easy to assess. This result could be attributed to the fact that most of the teachers perceived that indirect assessment (ID) as most appropriate to assess the aforementioned soft skill. 38.3%, 40.1%, and 37.3% opined that humility, ability to understand and follow

directions, and ability to analyse a problem in that order are often easy to analyse while on the contrary, 36.7%, 43.3%, 34.7%, 34%, 26%, 30%, 43.3%, 28%, 60% and 46.6% of the teachers agreed that the following soft skills are rarely and not easy to assess: adaptability, problem solving, enjoys mentoring and teaching, confidence, optimism, ability to lead, ability to think intuitively and effective communication respectively. This result is in consonant with the assertion of Aworanti (2014) that some African scholars see soft skills as too inherent and difficult to be examined. The result also agrees with Asuru and Ogidi (2013) who found that some of the challenges of assessing soft skill include teacher incompetency,

poor knowledge of test construction and lack of knowledge on how to properly assess soft skills.

It is pertinent to say that though the working experience of majority (78%) of the teachers falls between 10 – 28 years and above, and most of the teachers perceived that the combination of direct and indirect method of assessment is the most appropriate method for assessing the students’ soft skills mentioned above, yet they declared that most of the soft skills were rarely and not easy to assess.. This

implies that most of the teachers are not proficient in using the combination of direct and indirect method of assessment to measure students’ soft skills hence the need for teachers to be given adequate training on how to assess students’ soft skills using the CDI method.

H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significance difference between teachers’ perception of the best practices in soft skill assessment on gender basis

Table 1: Difference between Teachers’ Perception of the Best Practices in Soft Skills Assessment on Gender Basis

Gender	N	Mean	Std. D	Df	T	Sig
Male	148	232.60	38.210	299	.690	.492
Female	152	234.73	39.235			

The table above shows the difference between teacher’s’ perception of the best practices in soft skill assessment on gender basis. It shows that the calculated  $t_{(299)} = .690$ , as the P value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, that is ( $P > 0.05$ ). This shows that there is no significant gender difference between male and female teachers’ perceptions of the best practices in soft skills assessment. The mean difference in terms of gender also shows that female teachers had higher mean score of 234.73 than their male counterparts whose mean score was 232.60; the difference, in

the mean scores, was not significant. This result is in tandem with the findings of Onuka and Akinyemi (2012) that teachers irrespective of their gender are of the same opinion as regard the best practices for assessing students’ learning outcomes. This implies that the teachers irrespective of their gender have the same perception about the best practices for measuring students’ soft skills.

H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significance difference between teachers’ experiences in soft skills assessment on gender basis

Table 2: Difference between Teachers’ Experiences in Soft Skills Assessment on Gender Basis

Gender	N	Mean	Std. D	Df	T	Sig
Male	148	223.40	33.111	299	.810	.344
Female	152	212.22	31.001			

The table above shows the difference between teacher’s’ experiences in soft skill assessment on gender basis. It shows that the calculated  $t_{(299)} = .810$ , as the P value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, that is ( $P > 0.05$ ). This shows that there is no significant gender difference between male and female teachers’ experience in soft skills assessment. The mean difference in terms of gender also shows that male teachers had higher mean score of 223.40 than their female counterparts whose mean score was 212.22; the difference in the mean scores is not significantly different. This finding agrees with that of Onuka and Akinyemi (2012) that there was no significance difference between teachers’ experiences in assessment based on gender. This implies that the teachers irrespective of their gender have the same experiences in the assessment of students’ soft skills.

**CONCLUSION**

The study has established that most of the teachers perceived that the best practice or methods for assessing students’ soft skills is Indirect

Combination of Direct and Indirect assessment (CDI) and Indirect

Assessment (ID) while majority of them declared that some of the soft skills are rarely and not easy to assess. In addition there was no significant difference between male and female perceptions on the best practice for assessing soft skill as well as their experience in assessing students’ soft skills. Finally, the result also revealed that majority of all the teachers falls between 10 – 28 years and above while almost 85% of the teachers had Bachelor degree in Education while 15% of them had Masters Degree in Education as addition qualification.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Orientations program for teachers in soft skill assessment should be organized from time to time to enable them acquire necessary skills for assessing students’ soft skills which will add to their experiences in soft skills assessment as well as improve their proficiency in doing it.
2. Workshops and seminar should be organized for teachers to acquire in-depth knowledge of

the Combination of Direct and indirect (CDI) assessment methods which are essential and appropriate for measuring students' soft skills.

#### REFERENCES

Asuru, V. A. and Ogidi, R. C. (2013). Challenges Associated with Assessment of Soft Skills for Quality Education in Rivers South West Senatorial District in River State Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Assessment in Africa*, Vol 8, 196-211.

Aworanti, A. O. (2014). Application of Modified Measuring and Assessment of Soft Skills (MMASS) Instrument to Nigerian Secondary/Technical Education. A paper presented 32<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Association for Educational Assessment held in Livingstone, Zambia, 11-16 August, 2014.

Durowoju, E.O. (2014). Effect of continuous assessment modes on students' learning outcomes in commerce in Senior Secondary schools in Ibadan. A Ph.D Thesis submitted to Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

Etsey, Y.K.A. and Abu, A. (2013). Colleges of education tutors' capacity in classroom assesemnt in Northern Ghana. *Jornal of Educational Assessment in Africa*, Vol. 8, pp. 101 - 110

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). National Policy on Education. Abuja: Federal Republic of Nigeria  
LaFrance, A. E. (n.d.). Helping Students Cultivate Soft Skills retrieved from [www.slideshare.net/edwineiou/soft-skills-methods-of-teaching-and-assessment-on-20/08/2014](http://www.slideshare.net/edwineiou/soft-skills-methods-of-teaching-and-assessment-on-20/08/2014)

Oladokun, T. A. (2009). Path analytic model of school and teachers' variables on primary school pupils learning outcomes in Mathematics. A Ph.D Thesis submitted to Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

Onabamiro, A.T., Onuka, A. O. U. and Oyekanmi, S.A. (2014). Critical Stakeholders' Perception on the Teaching and Assessing of Soft Skills in Secondary Schools A paper presented at 32<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Association of Educational Assessment in Africa, at Livingstone, Zambia 11-16 August, 2014

Onuka, A. O. U. (2010). Feedback mechanism in open and distance learning. In Onuka, A. (ed.) *Some fundamentals of evaluation in managing open and distance learning by distance learning centre*, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. Pp. 84 – 100.

Onuka, A. O. U. and Akinyemi, T. F. (2012). Assessment as a tool for learning improvement at the Senior Secondary Education Level. In Abe C. V. and

Onuka, A. O. U. (ed.) *Revolutionising assessment and evaluation procedures in Education*, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. Pp 37 - 52

Onuka, A. O. U., Durowoju, E.O. and Onabamiro, A.T. (2014). Assessment of Teachers' Soft Skills at Workplace in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria A paper presented at 32<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Association of Educational Assessment in Africa, at Livingstone, Zambia 11-16 August, 2014

Wemael A. and Dar es S (2014). Assessment and Certification process for Soft Skills in Tanzania. A paper presented at 32<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Association of Educational Assessment in Africa, at Livingstone, Zambia 11-16 August, 2014