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Thesis Title: The current Fiji secondary school teachers classroom assessment and grading practices
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DECLARATION

Statement by Author

I, Ajay Mehta, declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published, or substantially overlapping with material submitted for the award of any other degree at any institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the text.

Signature …………………… Date…………………………
Name …………………………………………………………………
Student ID No. ……………………………

Statement by Supervisor

The research in this thesis was performed under my supervision and to my knowledge is the sole work of Mr. Ajay Mehta.

Signature…………………………….. Date ………………………..
Name………………………………………………………………..
Designation ………………………………………………………..
DEDICATION

I dedicate this Small Research Project to my daughter Aarna, wife Reshmi Lata and to my loving family and to all those people who have worked hard and supported me all throughout the journey enabling to complete this piece of work. You all were inspirational to my work and I salute you for that.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I heartily thank the following people for their kind support in the completion of this Mini Thesis.

- Dr Mesake Rawaiikela Dakuidreketi for his guidance and support throughout the course and providing enormous support towards the completion of this piece of work. Without your support this work would not have been possible.
- Secondary school principals for giving their and their staff enormous support and time in filling the questionnaire sheet on a timely basis.
- All the secondary school teachers for taking out their valuable time in filling the questionnaire sheet given even being so busy.
- Mr Osea Masilaca for his moral support and guidance throughout the project and at the same time giving me timely feedback which improved the quality of work that I have.
- Fiji Ministry of Education for allowing me to carry out the questionnaire in the selected secondary schools between Suva and Nausori corridor and providing needed support material on a timely basis. Sincere appreciation goes to the research section of Ministry of Education for providing efficient and effective processing process for the approval for this project.
- My wife Reshmi Lata for her tremendous support and motivation given towards my report. Without her financial and inspirational words this work would not be possible.
ABSTRACT

Assessment and grading practices in secondary schools have evolved universally and this has been also apparent in the Fiji secondary schools. These were appropriate due to the impact of globalization on Fiji’s education system; hence it has to benchmark itself with what’s generally accepted worldwide.

This mix-method study examined the current Fiji secondary school teachers’ assessment and grading practices. The sample size included 215 secondary school teachers who taught Year 9 to Year 12 student at secondary schools located along the Suva – Nausori corridor. The research instrument consists of three parts: (1) Demographic data, subject, year level, and number of students, (2) Secondary Teachers’ Assessment and Grading Practices Questionnaire, (3) Four open-ended questions based on teachers current assessment practices. Teachers were asked to comment on the most positive aspects of their assessment practices and their concerns regarding assessment currently done in their schools. Descriptive statistics and qualitative coding was used to analyse data.

The results revealed that (1) secondary school teachers are quite competent with the assessment, (2) teachers are utilizing many forms of assessment and grading practices, (3) teachers are well prepared to handle current assessment and grading practices, however, (4) there is some degree of inconsistency between the practices of secondary school teachers amongst themselves. Results of this study provide basic information for educationists on developing strategies to enhance teacher grading practices and assessments in Fiji Secondary Schools.

Finally, while this study is confined to an urban setting, it is recommended that extensive research on assessment and grading practices is also carried out in rural settings where results can be compared. This study can form the foundation for further research in this area.
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<td>DYP</td>
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<td>Primary years program</td>
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<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The central role that education plays in a person’s life cannot be undermined (Chandra, 2009). A good education can only be achieved if good assessment practices are adapted in educational institutes. As stated by Wiggins (n.d.), assessment is an integral part of instruction, as it determines whether or not the goals of education are being met. This has caused the interest in assessing student learning in colleges to increase in the final two decades of the twentieth century and continues to grow in the twenty first century. This has called for a need for straightforward, sensible guidance on how to assess student learning (Suskie, 2009). Thus, this study examines the current assessments and grading practices of secondary school teachers in Fiji.

The introductory chapter begins by stating the research problem and explaining why it is a problem. The aim and objectives of the study are then stated before the research questions which are intended to be answered for the study are given. This is followed by an explanation of the importance or significance and assumptions of the study. The chapter concludes by stating the focus and limitations of the study.

What is the problem?

Recently, there were a lot of changes that were noted in the way the assessments were carried out in Fiji secondary schools. Subsequently, all those assessment and grading reforms in Fiji secondary schools were brought back to the old practices this year ‘2015’ where the abolished examinations were reintroduced by the newly elected government in Fiji secondary and primary schools. However, the reforms in assessment and grading practices that were carried out in Fiji secondary schools before 2015 definitely brought changes to the decades of assessments procedures and processes that were actually performed in secondary schools.
The assessment reform movement brought classroom assessment and grading practices to the forefront as a possible route to improve teaching and learning (Hargreaves et al. 2002; James and Pedder, 2006; Lukin et al, 2004; Stiggins, 2004, 2005; Stiggins et al, 1986; McMillan, 2001, 2007; Wiggins, 1990a, 1990b, 1993, 2003 cited in Gurski (2008). Assessment reform theorists have maintained that, by implementing consistent and reliable assessment practices, teachers can improve the achievement level for students (Gurski, 2008). However, this did not happen in the case of Fiji secondary school assessment. The assessment practices changed rapidly over time. At first, examinations were considered important (before 2003) but later on it was replaced by internal assessments brought about by Fiji Education Sector Program (FESP). This was piloted in 2003 in selected secondary schools and implemented nationally in 2007 (Koya, 2008) and now again in year 2015 the examinations are reintroduced (Ministry of Education circular 1, 2015). This shows that our Fiji secondary schools assessment practices over the years have been inconsistent. On the other hand, changes in the assessment processes are inevitable, since the 21st century is demanding more comprehensive assessment practices.

In addition, there has been a break between the practices stated by measurement specialist and the day to day classroom assessment and grading practices of regular education teachers. McMillan and Workman (1998) found that teachers engage in assessment and grading practices that are inconsistent with what would be recommended by measurement experts. In addition, Allen, (2005); Brookhart, (1993, 1994); McMillan, (2007); Stiggins, (1989), Tomlinson, (2005) cited in Gurski (2008) stressed that teacher’s classroom assessment and grading practices tend to be unreliable, inconsistent, and often based on non-achievement factors. For example, in the case of Fiji secondary schools, a lot of changes came in assessment processes and types in a short period of time and now in 2015 it has been changed to the old practice again. A lot of changes in assessment practices in short period of time will definitely affect the teacher’s ability to produce quality assessment process and this can be seen in the results produced in past years. The Fiji Ministry of Education after reviewing the raw marks for students, found continuous poor performance of students in certain subjects from 2009 to 2014 for Fiji Year 12 and 13 Examination and this was because of no ‘push factor’ for teachers to produce quality results (Paul and Chandra, 2014; Ministry of Education Media Release 9, 2015). A greater
understanding of the continuous poor performance of students in Year 12 and Year 13 can be seen from the raw subject means from 2009 to 2014 (Table 1 and 2).
Table 1: Year 12 Raw Subject Means from 2009-2014 in Fiji School Leaving Certificate/Year 12 Certificate Examination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>2009</th>
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Source: 2013 FSLC Annual Report and 2014 Fiji ATLAS Database

* Means that internal assessment not included

↓ Means performance has decreased
Table 2: Year 13 Raw Subject Means from 2009-2014 in Fiji Seventh Form Examination/Year 13 Certificate Examination

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<th>Subject</th>
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Source: 2013 FSFCE Annual Report and 2014 Fiji ATLAS Database

↓ Means performance has decreased
The tables clearly show that the performance of students in Year 12 and Year 13 has dramatically decreased over the period of six years in many subject areas. Even though the internal assessment was brought to the school system in 2011, it did little to change the performance of the students in these levels.

In addition, it can be noted that when there were external exams (During Year 2009 and 2010), many subjects had their mean performance decreased. When IA was introduced (from 2011 to 2014) the mean performance continued to decrease. However, when IA was introduced more subjects had their mean decreased compared to when exams were there. For instance, for Year 12 when an exam was there it had 10 subjects mean decreased compared to 11 when IA was introduced. Similarly Year 13 had 10 subjects mean decreased when exam was there compared to 14 when IA was introduced. Furthermore, some practical based subjects such as Technical Drawing and design had their means increased. This may be as a result of IA which was more practical which further enhanced the concepts which were previously done.

Thus, it seems important that the current practices of teachers in the classrooms are evaluated to improve the current situation. Since assessment and grading practices are an integral part of the teaching and learning process, the past and present practices have enormous effects on students’ learning.

**Why is it a problem?**

In Fiji’s education sector, changes in regards to classroom assessment has been apparent and as stipulated in the Peoples Charter (2009) that by year 2014 Fiji needs to become a knowledge based society hence, this resulted in the abolishment of the external exams. However, this did not last long as the examinations were reintroduced in the education system in year 2015. The abolishment of external examination in Year 10 from 2011 till 2014 brought the introduction of internal assessment which mandated teachers to implement various assessment and grading practices in order to monitor the progress of students learning (“Exams Out,” 2009). The Policy in National Curriculum Assessment and Reporting (2011) states that information collected for assessment should provide valid and reliable indications of whether students can do the things described in the outcomes
consistently over a range of circumstances. In addition, the policy states that teacher judgments should also draw on different sources of information, such as teachers’ anecdotal records, work samples, portfolios, student self-evaluations, students’ written or visual journals, peer assessment, checklists, teacher-made tests, standardized tests, audiotapes, videotapes, interviews and testimonials from members of the community. Since examinations are being brought back, it would be good to know whether or not teachers are still utilising different sources of information to make judgment on student’s performance.

McMillan and Lawson (2001) stressed that teachers are concerned with student motivation, self-esteem, and social consequences of giving grades. Using students’ achievement as the sole criteria for determining grades is rare. This is consistent with earlier work by Brookhart (1991) cited in McMillan and Lawson (2001), in which she pointed out that grading often consists of a “hodgepodge” of attitude, effort, and achievement. It is essential that classroom assessment and grading practices need to be consistent and reliable as what is claimed by measurement theorists (McMillan and Workman, 1998). Since, assessment and grading practices have enormous effects on students learning and their future, proper assessment and grading practices are needed in school so that students are not victimized by the current and past assessment and grading practices. Hence, examining the current factors used for grading students, types of assessment used and knowing the cognitive level of assessment used by teachers will allow appropriate actions to be taken. It will make assessment more reliable and consistent as desired by measurement theorist.

In Fiji, currently considerable reforms have happened in the education sector and educational assessment is no exception as mentioned earlier. Changes in assessment have come fast, stayed and now have gone back to the old practices and many teachers with their past and current practices are now challenged with these changes in assessments. Hence, a greater understanding of the issue could be obtained by looking at the current and past assessment and grading practices of Fiji secondary school teachers’ to see whether the teachers at secondary level are carrying out the process of assessment as required or they lack consistency with their practices.
Aim & Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to find out what the current assessment and grading practices of secondary school teachers in Fiji are like.

The objectives of the study related to this aim are as follows:

1. To examine classroom grading practices employed by secondary school teachers’ in Fiji.
2. To explore assessment, grading factors and cognitive factors assessed by secondary school teachers’ in Fiji.
3. To investigate what the current perceptions of secondary school teachers are about their assessment and grading in Fiji’s secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions pertaining to secondary classroom assessment and grading practices were considered:

1. How do teachers assess and grade their students at secondary school levels in Fiji?
2. What type of assessments, grading factors, and cognitive levels are frequently assessed in the current classroom assessment and grading practices of secondary teachers?
3. What are the perceptions of secondary school teachers about the current assessment and grading practices?

Significance of the study

This study aims to provide sufficient data in considering the past and the current classroom assessment and grading practices of secondary school teachers in Fiji. The significance of classroom assessment and grading practices that are meaningful, relevant, and useful is
crucial in enhancing learning for all students. Examining the factors used for grading students, types of assessment used and knowing the cognitive level of assessment used by teachers will allow appropriate actions to be taken to make assessment more reliable and consistent as desired by measurement theorists.

This study intends to provide opportunities to increase professional development resources, support for more collaborative educational practices and future consideration of best practices to meet the needs of students. In addition, through this research the assessment reform that happened and is happening will be evaluated and a check can be made to see how school teachers are progressing through the assessment and grading practices.

**Assumptions**

The following assumptions were made in the study:

1. The responses that were collected formed the accurate picture of the classroom and school practices for the ‘Years’ for which data was collected.

2. Teachers’ responses provided precise, thoughtful, and honest responses to the surveyed items.

3. Teachers who took part in this survey were qualified current Fiji secondary school teachers.

**Focus and Limitations**

The researcher sought to examine the current assessment and grading practices of secondary school teachers’ in Fiji to improve the problem. The focus of this research was mainly on the Years 9 - 12 current secondary school teachers’ in Fiji who are teaching at least three kilometres from the Kings highway along the Suva to Nausori corridor. Only Year 9 to Year 12 teachers’ were selected for the study because many reforms in regards to assessments and grading practices were happening at these levels even though things have now been brought back to the old practices. Year 13 had little change to its assessment and grading practices as they continued with their Examination to date.
However, Year 12 had it external exam as before but it had few changes in terms of its internal assessment marks.

The study limited its findings to one urban setting which was between Suva to Nausori corridor in Fiji, where eleven secondary schools were selected which lie at least 3km from the Kings highway between Suva and Nausori corridor. Responses for the study were limited to current Fiji secondary school teachers’ who teach Year 9 to Year 12 in these selected schools only and involved all different subject teachers. Teachers teaching these levels were selected because the levels were the ones where reforms happened in regard to assessment and grading practices. However, these levels now (from year 2015) have moved back to the old practices as before because the exams have been re-introduced.

The researcher was anticipating a much higher response rate than achieved but this could not happen because teachers in secondary schools at that time were busy with their Term End of term examination analysis and getting ready for parents interview. Since, the survey was carried out in the third school term; teachers were preparing for the external examination and the researcher believes this could be another factor for lowing the response rate.

Another limitation was lack of time. Due to time constraint, the researcher tried to make as many visits as possible to the schools but this was not enough because the researcher himself was a full time primary school teacher. In addition, financial constraint was also faced by the researcher which also limited the planned visits to the schools when most anticipated.

The survey questionnaire limit teachers to respond to six options on the Likert Scale type survey questionnaire where the scale was ranging the responses of (1) not at all to (6) completely. The results of this study cannot be used to generalize the assessment and grading practices of all the current Fiji secondary school teachers’ in the country.

Finally, the researcher was anticipating that the assessment and grading practices are not going to be changed in year 2015. However, this did not happen. The data collection and analysis was done for the data collected on the last week of August to the last week of September, 2014. There was no inclusion of year 2015 changes in assessment and grading
practices in the questionnaire too. Thus, this study cannot be used to make any judgment on the changes in assessment and grading practices that has happened in year 2015.
CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

It is very important that the background information of the area where the research was investigated to be fully understood for one to appreciate the findings shown in the investigation. It may be inappropriate to generalise findings to similar areas without having the knowledge of the context in which the research was carried out.

In respect to this, a brief description of Fiji, Fiji’s education system and the current assessment and grading practices will be discussed in this chapter.

The Country- Fiji

The Republic of Fiji comprises a group of volcanic islands in the South Pacific lying about 4,450 km. (2,775 mi.) southwest of Honolulu and 1,770 km. (1,100 mi.) north of New Zealand. Its 322 islands range in size from the large islands--Viti Levu (where Suva and Nausori are and where 70% of the population is located) and Vanua Levu--to many smaller islands, of which just over 100 are inhabited. The larger islands contain mountains as high as 1,200 meters (4,000 ft.) rising abruptly from the shore (“Geography of Fiji,” n.d). It has a total land area of 18,270 square kilometres, much of which is rugged mountains (“Fiji,” 2009).

The climate of Fiji is mostly tropical and the temperature fluctuates, where from during November to April the months are warmer and wetter whereas middle of May to October it is cooler and drier. The Eastern side of the main islands has more rainfall whereas the western side is generally drier. The country’s population in the last census (2007 census) stood at 837,271. Suva is the capital city and main port of entry with a population of 88,763. The rural population was 412,425 (49.3%) and the urban population was 424,846 (50.7%). (2007 Population Census of Fiji, Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, 2014).
The physical formation of land in the country has influenced the distribution of the population as the majority of people are in town and cities whereas people are also scattered all over the land in small villages that have been erected along the costal line or near the valleys. The remoteness at times poses many challenges for the people as they have to travel long distances to get access to services which may at times be only available in urban centres. Fiji is rich with essential resources such as stunting ocean and beaches, forest, minerals, and other scenery which may not be found in many other parts of the world. Fiji in addition, is famous for rugby and it also engages in sugar production which is exported to many EU countries.

**Figure 1: The Republic of Fiji’s Map Showing the Major Areas**

![Map of Fiji showing major areas](http://fijilive.com/fijimagic/fullmap.php)

**Source:** http://fijilive.com/fijimagic/fullmap.php

**Key**

Centres where research study was based
Fiji’s Education System

Fiji has a well structured education system. There are 735 Primary Schools, 17 special education schools, over 800 ECE centres and 178 Secondary schools in Fiji (Ministry of Education Annual Report, 2013). The student’s education in Fiji begins from preschool [5 year old] also known as kindergarten, and proceeds to the primary level [6 to 13 years old], secondary level [14 to 18 years old] after which students can attend tertiary institutions. The preschool year is for the children to get used to the school system and at least develop some skills necessary for entry to Year 1 (Class 1) through a play based curriculum. The Ministry of Education annual report (2013) states that 37,420 children were between the age of 4 and 5 years old (of preschool age), 125,864 children were of primary school age (between 6 - 13 years of age) and 78,336 were in the secondary school age group (between 14-18 years of age).

The formal education in Fiji begins from Year 1. The primary school normally covers Year 1 (Class 1) to Year 8 (Class 8) education. However, in some schools Year 7 (Class 7) and Year 8 are part of secondary schools. Year 9 (Form 3) to Year 13 (Form 7) education is provided in secondary schools. Some secondary schools may not have Year 13 or may only have education provided to Year 12 (Form 6) level. In this regard, the government of Fiji is recognising the importance of having an educated society where it has reaffirmed its commitment by adopting the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All (Ministry of Education Annual Report, 2013). Hence, this has catalysed many new initiatives and reforms in the education sector in the short duration of time so that the country works towards building a knowledge based society.

The Fiji’s education system in the past few years has received tremendous attention by the past government and currently the newly elected government is doing the same. In this regard, in the year 2014 the education sector received the highest proportion of the national budget. This has continued where the education sector again received the second highest allocation in 2015 national budget amounting to 556 million dollars (Ministry of Education Newsletter, 2015). The government has taken proactive initiatives to help the stakeholders in the education sectors and some of these initiatives taken include: the
transport assistance scheme where students whose parental income is less than $15,600 are provided with vouchers to travel to school free in any public transport; all students are provided with free text books in school; students do not pay any school fees; and students in Year 1 are receiving 250ml of milk and wheat bix daily without any cost to them.

**Figure 2: The levels of education system in Fiji**

![Levels in education system in Fiji]

Preschool [37,420 students, 5 years old]

Primary School [125,864 students, 6 to 13 year old]

Secondary School [78,336 students, 14 to 18 year old]

Tertiary (Universities) [19 and plus year old]

Source: Ministry of Education Annual Report, 2013

**Assessment and Grading in Fiji Secondary Schools**

There were some changes made in the Fiji school system recently in regard to external examination. The Form 4 examination Fiji Junior Certificate (FJC)] which was abolished in year 2012 and replaced by Internal Assessment is now re-introduced in 2015 by the current government and it is going to be called Year 10 Examination. The Form 6 examination which used to be called New Zealand University Entrance, (NZUE) was later re-named to Fiji School Leaving Certificate Examination (FSLCE) and is now known as Fiji Year 12 Certificate Examination (FY12CE) whereas the Form 7 examination which was also known as Fiji Seventh Form Examination (FSFE) is now called Fiji Year 13 Certificate Examination (FY13CE).
The term “Form” has now changed to be called “Year”. That is: “Form 3” is now called “Year 9” and so on till Year 13 (Form 7). Year 9 and Year 10 used to have only internal assessment where the students were graded with Classroom Based Assessment (CBA), Common Assessment Task (CAT), short test and examination to attain the following grades: Basic 50% to 64%, Proficient 65% to 84%, and Advanced 85% to 100%. This grading system was introduced in 2009 and continued until 2014. However, the whole system was again changed in 2015 where there will be no more CAT and CBA tasks given to students in the two levels (Years 9 & 10). According to the Ministry of Education Fiji’s circular 4 (2015) from Year 11, there will be no project tasks from 2015 onwards. The Year 10 External Examination will be a Competency Based Assessment to gauge students’ ability and interest and provide parallel pathways either in the purely academic or technical oriented fields. As stated in the Ministry of Education Fiji’s circular number 1 (2015) the results from the Year 10 External Examination will provide students with crucial information on the strengths and weaknesses in the various subjects undertaken which will assist the student to make realistic subject choices at the Year 11 level and students who score low in the examination will be allowed to repeat the year. In addition, from 2015, in order to maintain quality in the assessment program and assure student progress, standard internal examination will be introduced as final examinations at Year 9 and Year 11 levels. These examinations will now be prepared by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). The only IA task is a project done in Year 12 and the marks will be included in the Year 12 external examination. This will begin in the 2016 school year. As from 2015, the coverage in each subject area is anticipated to be completed by the end of Term Two whereas in the past, this coverage was completed in three terms. Now, Term Three is to be used for thorough structured remedial and revision work.

Six compulsory subjects are offered in Year 9 and 10. There are English, Mathematics, Basic Science, Social Science, Commercial Studies and Family Life. Students are allowed to choose another two subjects of their area of interest from Agriculture, Basic Technology, Home Economics, Hindi, Fijian, and Office Technology. In addition, PEMAC (Physical Education, Music, and Art & Craft) is also offered by all schools at these two levels which is assessed internally but not externally. The Year 10 also includes Common Assessment Task (CAT) designed by the Ministry of Education. As stated in the
Ministry of Education Fiji’s circular 8 (2015) the standard Final Year 9 internal examination paper and external Year 10 examination papers will now be prepared by MOE in the following subjects: English, Mathematics, Basic Science, Social Science, Commercial Studies, Vernacular (Hindi/iTaukei/Urdu/ Rotuman Language), Home Economics, Agricultural Science, Office Technology, and Basic Technology.

At the end of Year 12 students sit the Fiji Year 12 Certificate Examination. Year 11 and 12 have English and Mathematics as the compulsory subjects and students can choose another three subjects which interest them either from science or arts fields which is offered at school. At times students are allowed to choose some other preferred subjects from either science or arts as preference is given to student’s choice. Projects are also part of assessment in Year 11 and Year 12. However, from 2016, coverage of Year 12 External Exam will be based on the Year 12 syllabus alone (Curriculum Development Unit Circular 4, 2015). Moving on, as from this year - 2015, according to the MOE media release 9 (2015), all scaling of external examination marks will be removed. According to the Education Minister the Honourable Dr. Reddy (2015) scaling was a fundamental process used to convert scores to a common scale which adjusted the results students achieved in their various subjects for the purpose of aggregation, ranking and selection for entry to Universities or other Tertiary Institutions and scholarships award. Despite the good rationales for scaling, the contrasting school of thought argued that scaling conceals the raw marks and does not reflect students’ true achievement. Dr. Reddy further stated that scaling of marks in the external exams perpetuated inefficiency in the system did not serve as an incentive for teachers to work hard to raise student performance and students did not know about their true performance. Scaling further disguised the true body of knowledge a student had and thus, misled the labour market or the universities. In light of these anomalies, Ministry of Education, decided that scaling of marks be discontinued in external examinations from ‘2015’. Students would be given raw marks as true representations of the student’s ability and teacher’s performance (Ministry of Education Media Release 9, 2015).
These are some major changes in assessment which the Ministry of Education has reintroduced in 2015 but whether these changes will bring about positive results in years to come remains to be seen.
CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter discusses the relevant literature pertaining to the assessment and grading practices in schools. Firstly, it defines classroom assessment. Secondly, the Republic of Fiji Education System is discussed followed by assessment and grading in the classroom; and emerging assessment and its processes. In addition, some studies done on classroom assessment in Fiji are discussed before a summary of the main points are stated for the Chapter. A Conceptual Framework of the study is also presented at the end of this chapter.

Definition of classroom assessment

There are several definitions of classroom assessment found in the literature. For example, D'Agostino (2009) defined classroom assessment as a process performed by teachers that involved designing, collecting, interpreting and applying information about student learning and attainment to make educational decisions. Ebert II, Ebert and Bentley (2011) stated classroom assessment as an educational strategy coming at the beginning and at the end of instruction for teachers.

Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003) described classroom assessment as a broad spectrum of activities ranging from paper-pencil tests and performance measures, to grading, to communicating and using test results in decision making. Afemikhe and Omo-Egbekuse (n.d.) defined classroom assessment as the totality of all processes and procedures utilized within the school to collect information for making decisions about the students.

Black and William (1998) asserted that classroom assessment is the effective aspect of teaching and learning and is also an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Stiggins, Arter, Chappius & Chappius (2007) delineated classroom assessment as ‘assessment of learning’ (those assessments that happen after learning) and ‘assessment for learning’ (those assessments that happen while learning is still underway).
By analyzing the definitions of classroom assessments it is apparent that classroom assessment is a continuous process that commences at the start of learning, while learning is ongoing and at the cessation of learning. Thus, the definition by Stiggins, Arter, Chappius & Chappius (2007) along with that of Ebert II, Ebert and Bentley (2011) will be considered for this study. These definitions seem appropriate because they show that assessment is an ongoing process which starts through the preparatory stage as what is to be assessed to the end when the marked scripts are analysed to make meaning out of it to awarding grades to different achievers. It only seems appropriate that the current Fiji Education System assessment practices are evaluated to see how well these definitions fit in.

Republic of Fiji Education System

In Fiji’s education sector, a change in regards to classroom assessment has been apparent. Changes to assessment in Fiji began in 2003 (Koya, 2008). As stipulated in the Peoples Charter (2009) by year 2014, Fiji needs to become a knowledge based society. In this regard, year 2010 brought the abolishment of three external examinations. Fiji Intermediate Examination (FIE) in 2010 and in 2011, the Fiji Eighth Year Examination (FEYE) and Fiji Junior Certificate Examinations (FJC) were abolished. This was done so that students would be able to have twelve years of basic education (“Exams Out,” 2009). However, the abolished examinations have been reintroduced in 2015 by the newly elected government when it was found by the Ministry of Education after reviewing the raw marks for students in certain subjects from 2009 to 2014 for Fiji Year 12 and 13 Examinations that students have shown continuous poor performance (Ministry of Education Media Release 9, 2015)

The abolition of external examination in Year 10 in 2011 (“Exams Out,” 2009) and the introduction of internal assessment have mandated teachers to implement various assessment and grading practices in order to monitor the progress of the students learning. Change in assessment was brought about by Fiji Education Sector Program (FESP) which was the Internal Assessment Initiative piloted in 2003 in selected secondary schools and was implemented nationally in 2007 (Koya, 2008). For instance, fifty per cent of FJC
marks were to be taken from the Form 3 work which was internally assessed by subject teachers. Out of that fifty percent, form 3 students had twenty percent of their work assessed by their own teachers (“Exams Out,” 2009). Tasks were assigned to help teachers and students determine levels of attainment and areas which needed improvement. This was a formative means of gauging students’ progress and to help students reach their optimal levels of development (The Standards Site, 2007; FESP, 2007, p.54) cited in Koya, (2008). This made teachers to devise many innovative tasks to assess students on their progress. In this regard, The National Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Policy (2011) states that information collected for assessment should provide valid and reliable indications of whether students can do the things described in the outcomes consistently over a range of circumstances. If judgments of student achievement are consistent and fair, they need to be based on the integration of many kinds and sources of evidence collected in various situations over a period of time.

In addition, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education – Republic of Fiji, teacher judgments should also draw on different sources of information, such as teachers’ anecdotal records, work samples, portfolios, student self-evaluations, students’ written or visual journals, peer assessment, checklists, teacher-made tests, standardized tests, audiotapes, videotapes, interviews and testimonials from members of the community. This means teachers should use a variety of assessment and grading practices over time to see the students’ progress not just by relying on certain practice which may not suit the learner all the time. Reforms in assessment and grading practices in the school have demanded a lot, thus resulting in many teachers to be on par with the expectations. For example, recently introduced internal assessment (from 2011 to 2014) required all teachers to grade children with the three grade systems that are Basic 50% to 64%, Proficient 65% to 84%, and Advanced 85% to 100% which caused confusion to teachers who considered the wide range in the grade percentages. It is apparent that changes in assessment and the process in assessment has become a sophisticated activity in schools. These changes in assessment process as have made teachers use diverse means of assessing students. It raises a big question whether the teachers are carrying out the assessment process as required or they are still with their traditional methods of assessing students. Learning more about the
teachers’ assessment and grading practices in the classroom will enable a better understanding of their assessment process.

**Assessment and Grading in classroom**

There is a plethora of studies on classroom assessment with varying results in the literature. However, there is no study so far done in Fiji which evaluates whether the desired assessment and assessment processes are carried out by teachers. Ogunmade (2005) conducted a mixed-method study to investigate and describe the status and quality of secondary science teaching and learning in Lagos State Nigeria. Quantitative data was coded and analyzed using SPSS13.0 statistical package to obtain descriptive statistics while qualitative data was transcribed and categorized into emerging themes and triangulation of data was used to explore the authenticity of teaching and learning. The study found that the teachers in this sample lacked appropriate subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills to teach as required of them and most alarming was the lack or limited understanding of their learners. It is not surprising that teachers are not carrying out the assessment practices as desired because assessment practices are more complicated than simply understanding the learner. Some of the studies carried out in the other parts of the world give a brief idea as how the assessment and its process have been carried out.

A study carried out in United States of America by Zhang & Burry-Stock (2003) investigated 297 secondary teachers’ assessment practices across teaching levels and subject areas using the Assessment Practice Inventory and the analysis involved a MANOVA design. The study findings revealed that: as the grade increases, teachers relied more on objective tests and showed increasing concerns for assessment quality; teacher assessment practices differ across subject areas and knowledge in measurement and testing contributed significantly on teachers self perceived assessment skills regardless of their years of experience.

Stiggins and Bridgford (1985) in the United States of America surveyed 228 teachers in which these teachers describe their classroom assessment practices in terms of its use, preference, attitudes, and role of performance assessment. Across all grades, teacher made objective tests and structured performance tests increase in importance whereas reliance
on published spontaneous performance test declined. In a review of research studies regarding teachers’ assessment and grading practices, it was found that teachers primarily use self-constructed assessments (Marso and Pigge, 1993) cited in McMillan and Workman (1998). In addition, a survey of 536 secondary teachers in Richmond in the United States of America by Fray et al. (1993) found that objective assessments were used most, and then projects, term papers, and lastly essays.

In Malawi, Susuwele-Banda (2005) investigated teachers’ perceptions of classroom assessment and their current assessment practices. Results from the study found that: teachers perceived classroom assessment as tests given to students at certain time intervals; what teachers claimed about their teaching methodology was not reflected in actual practice; there was limitations in the utilization of different teaching methods and tools to assess their students; teachers’ perception of classroom assessment have significant influence on their classroom assessment practices. A requisite majority i.e. 83% of the teachers studied perceived assessment as only testing, where classroom assessment was not fundamental used in their teaching practices. Lastly, the study revealed teacher experience and teacher education programs did not enhance teachers’ perception of classroom assessment; but academic qualification did influence teachers’ flexibility to accept new ideas.

In Nigeria, Afemikhe and Omo-Egbekuse (n.d.) conducted a review on the implementation of classroom assessments. They found that where continuous classroom assessment was supposed to be done, the teachers embarked on continuous testing, where the tests were marked and recorded in students’ folders with no diagnostic purposes served. The review also highlighted that there was a need for emphasis on teachers’ knowledge and skills on classroom assessment and to the notion where teachers’ claims that he or she is competent in assessment does not guarantee that proper assessments are carried out in schools. Furthermore, it was suggested that there was a need for teacher continual upgrading programs in the area of classroom assessment for better understanding of current situations of assessments in the classroom and where teachers needed to develop a pool of test items to counter the constraints anticipated in classroom assessment.
Recently, Rahman, Babu and Ashraful (2011) explored classroom assessment and feedback practices in secondary schools in Bangladesh. Findings from the study revealed: (i) that assessment and feedback were an inseparable part of classroom practice, however this practice was not up to the expected standard in this settings [studied secondary schools in Bangladesh]; (ii) for assessment purposes teachers frequently asked closed ended questions which the researchers argued were from the lowest level of cognitive domains, (iii) the student preferred oral assessment to written because there was a greater tendency to copy in the latter, (iii) feedback in the classroom was not at the satisfactory level. The researchers finally reiterated that assessment and feedback practices had been identified as effective and inseparable components of classroom procedures in a plethora of literature, so teachers should be more vigilant about this practice, along with the need for intensive reviews of schools curriculum for better understanding of the assessment system.

Duncan and Noonan (2007) in Canada conducted a study on factors affecting teachers’ grading and assessment practices. Five-hundred and thirteen teachers were included in this sample and a stratified random sampling method was utilized. A thirty-four item instrument developed by McMillan (2001) was utilized in this study. The results of the study showed that in the area of subject taught, Mathematics and Science teachers were more inclined to conduct group quizzes with objective assessments and avoidance of using external benchmarks was also apparent in these teachers. For grading practices, mathematic teachers emphasized lesser than English, Social Studies, and practical arts teachers in specific areas of academic enabling behaviours. On assessment strategies Mathematics teachers emphasized less on constructed response assessment (e.g. essay type question, individual and team projects and oral presentations) than teachers in other subject area; but social studies teachers reported a higher frequency. On cognitive levels of assessment which involved measuring, understanding, reasoning and application it was found that mathematic teachers implemented higher order thinking more than other teachers, especially those in the performing arts, fine arts and religion. The researchers finally asserted that classroom assessment requires a more rigorous application of measurement concepts.
In a recent descriptive, non-experimental, quantitative study by Grimes (2010), in Virginia - the United States of America found that teachers have started to use varieties of assessment methods and types of questions when measuring achievement. Frary, Cross, and Weber (1993) believed that teachers use varieties of assessment approaches however, they noted that 66% of the teachers in the survey agreed that essay tests provide a better assessment of student knowledge than multiple choice test; and that 47% agreed that the nature of multiple choice items encourage learning and better measurement occurs when teachers award partial credit rather than scoring simply right and wrong answer.

It seems that teachers are not utilising the assessment practices as desired. Most of the teachers are resorting for easier and simple form of assessment which is easy to mark and record. This may also be the case in Fiji schools as we are more exam oriented and the number of students in the class may surely make teachers resort to easier assessments. However, in recent years Fiji has seen a lot of changes in the education sector and enormous changes were seen in assessment and assessment process. New innovative methods of assessment have been discovered and brought to schools for teachers to use. Hence, it is important to know what these new practices are and how it works.

**Emerging assessments and its processes**

Darling-Hammond (1994) stated that in recent years, school reform movement has made widespread efforts to transform the ways in which students work and learning is assessed in schools.

In the twenty first century classroom, it is true that student has come up with many different ways in which they work. The Capacity Building Series produced by Student Achievement Division (2013) states that now student are expressing learning in a variety of ways such as in writing, art and drama; in gesture, body language and even silence. Therefore, educators now have to take diverse approaches to assess students. Britland (n.d) believes that technology allows students to become more independent in classroom. This has made teachers to act more as the facilitator than the teacher. Computers have replaced chalkboards as the go-to tool in classrooms today. This has not just happened in higher education; technology has become part of education for children of all ages.
(Donley, 2012). In State Educational Technology Directors Association Education Forum, Duncan (2010) claims that technology empowers students like never before to support their personal mission of providing the best possible education. On the other hand, Cradler, McNabb, Freeman and Burchett (2002) believe that technology has made students to have high order thinking and good problem solving development. Thus, it is important that students are assessed with assessments that can tap this high order thinking.

Recent advancement in the cognitive and measurement sciences has formed the foundation for developing a new system of student assessment (Pellegrino, Chudiwsky and Glaser (2001). Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956) almost six decades ago published a widely accepted taxonomy for classifying objectives and assessment items for cognitive domain. This taxonomy range from lowest to highest: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Carter (1984); Gage and Berliner (1992); Woolfolk (1993) believe that objective test items used at all levels of education overwhelmingly tap lower (i.e., knowledge and comprehension) of this taxonomy. Similarly, Hummel and Huitt (1994) believe that lower level of thinking skills such as knowledge and comprehension used will not develop and use higher order skills of students even if instructional methods are implemented.

Linn and Gronlund (2000) claim that no test or assessment can ask questions or pose all the problems which might present a comprehensive coverage of knowledge, skills, and understanding relevant to the content objectives of a course or instruction. Stiggins (2004) believes that in future, we need to create different reality and tap the full potential of assessment as our ally in improving student learning and in this; we must refocus our efforts around overarching assessment beliefs where a balance between standardized tests of learning and classroom assessment for learning should be balanced. Hence this calls for some transformed assessments.

The transformed assessments “includes oral presentations, debates, or exhibitions, along with collection of students written products, videotapes of performances and other learning occasions, constructions and models, and their solutions to problems, experiments, or results of scientific and other inquiries” (Archbald & Newman, 1988)
cited in Darling-Hammond (1994:5). It also includes “teacher observations and inventories of individual students work and behaviour, as well as of cooperative group work”, (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 1988) cited in Darling-Hammond (1994:6). These alternatives are called performance based or “authentic” assessment as they engage students’ real world task rather than multiple choice tests, and evaluated according to criteria that are important for actual performance in a field of work (Wiggins, 1989) cited in Darling Hammond (1994). Pellegrino, Chudiwsky and Glaser (2001:52) claims that “an accurate picture of students can be attained through a mix of assessment measures from the classroom to the national level” when they “are coordinated to reflect a shared understanding of how learning occurs”. Horn (1995:1) also believes no responsible person can claim that any form of assessment can totally evaluate a student’s school experience or learning. He believes that it is possible to develop indicators to measure learning along important dimensions, closely related to curriculum, both in standardized assessment instruments and in alternative forms of assessment. Horn (1995:12) also believes that “Standardized tests render viable, inexpensive, reliable, and valid indicators of student learning” whereas alternative forms of assessment can also provide viable information on student progress and attainment if validity and reliability is assured.

These emerging assessment and processes are good but it all depends on the availability of the resources. In urban schools as the resources are available hence, higher order question could be used as it improves the students thinking ability. Thus, it is important to know what is currently happening in the school classrooms in Fiji.

**Situation of classroom assessment in The Republic of Fiji**

There is a paucity of research articles on classroom assessment and grading practices in the Republic of Fiji. However, a study done by Thimmappa and Sushita (2003) focused on assessment practices in a Suva based school whereby its implications for Pacific educational management and teacher education was discussed. The study stipulated that learning should not be viewed as providing students with opportunities and increasing their chances of success. However, it should be viewed as an integrated system in holistic
education. It was noted that the institution studied had a continuous assessment system from the primary years program (PYP), middle years program (MYP) and diploma years program (DYP).

The PYP teachers monitored their students’ performances and progress through individual files, progress files, sample folders and portfolios, which involve formative assessment, summative assessment, performance assessment, process focused assessment, open-ended tasks and portfolio. The MYP prepares adolescents for their future adult life in the community, where the focus was on community values and opportunities were required for critical thinking and judgment and central to this curriculum are competencies of learning and discriminating.

Lastly the DYP has curriculum that exhibits a pre-university course of study of which 50% is school based assessment and 50% external examination. The paper strongly suggested that the Republic of Fijis’ education system should take its cue from this school for the reasons stated above.

In addition, another study carried out by Koya (2008) titled: The Quest for Authentic Assessment: What are we assessing and Why? An examination of the Internal Assessment (IA) Initiative at Secondary School Level in Fiji; examined the beliefs, values and experiences of third and fourth form students and their teachers on the introduced internal assessment initiative in Fiji. This study was carried out at one of the first schools to be piloted for the IA initiative in 2003. The mixed method study found that the IA initiative in its current form does not seem to be working. There was indications by students, teachers and parents that the load of IA is demanding resulting in either an over emphasis of IA and negligence of content syllabus or completing IA tasks for the sake of reporting rather than informing classroom practices.

It seems that Fiji has taken some good initiatives but these initiatives are not producing the results as desired. In Fiji so far no research has been done to evaluate the current assessment and grading practices of teachers. Education is a fundamental tool for success in life and this comes from a good education system and its processes. Stiggins (2004) stated that it is crucial to obtain feedback from teachers on classroom assessment. Unless
the current processes in assessment are investigated fully, it would probably just remain a talk for many without doing anything about it.

**Summary**

In summary, it is evident that literature have focused on classroom assessments from many dimensions and there has been mention of reforms needed in the education system with regards to classroom assessment so that it enhances the paradigm shift in education from a traditional approach to a constructivist approach. Therefore, visiting the procedures and process in the assessment practices would greatly enhance and evaluate the practices currently done in Fiji secondary schools.

**Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was derived from the literature reviews. There are various conceptual ideologies identified regarding classroom assessment derived from the literature, however, factors used to determine grades, types of assessment, cognitive level of assessment were chosen due to its applicability to the situation in the Republic of Fiji.

![Figure 3: Schematic representation of the conceptual framework of the study](image-url)
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the selected research design, research setting and sample chosen for the research. In addition, research instrument is elaborated in detail together with the instrument validity and reliability. Moreover, data collection procedures are explained followed by data analysis methods. The chapter ends with the paragraphs explaining the research ethics procedure used in the study.

Research Design

In the past two decades, the research approaches have multiplied to a point which has given the investigator many choices (Creswell, 2003). Research can be qualitative, quantitative or it can be a mixed approach research. As cited by Chandra (2009) a number of researchers (Creswell, 2002, 2003; Greene & Caracelli, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003) from the fields of social sciences, humanities and psychology have recently advocated the use of mixed methods. Holden and Lynch (2004) claim that research should not be methodologically led; rather that methodological choice should be consequential to the researcher’s philosophical stance and the social science phenomenon to be investigated.

Thus, in respect to the recent advancement in research approaches, the researcher selected the mixed method approach study for this research. The mixed method was used so that the research did not entirely depend on the numerical data but to includes views of the participants on issues that had not been included in the survey.

Research Setting and Sample

The research setting for this study was secondary schools which lie near the Suva Nausori corridor (at least 3km within from the main road- Kings Highway). Purposeful sampling which occurs when the researcher selects people who have the required status or
experience or are endowed with the special knowledge to provide the researcher with vital information was employed firstly to select the schools then to recruit the participants for this study.

Table 3   Classification of secondary schools chosen for the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Total Number of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boarding School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day School</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Gender Schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Gender School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys School</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls School</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 14 secondary schools around the Suva and Nausori corridor, 11 were selected for this study. These 11 secondary schools were chosen based on their location where the researcher chose only those schools which lie at least three kilometres from the Suva Nausori highway.

A purposeful sample of three hundred and fifty (350) current secondary school teachers who taught Years 9 to 12 from the 11 selected secondary schools was considered for this study. These teachers were general secondary school teachers who taught different subjects in their respective schools. This number of teachers was chosen based on the number of teachers in each school. Since the research was only to be carried out between Suva and Nausori corridor, the number of teachers in each school was the deciding factor to the number questionnaires given to each school.

The teachers in the research settings were invited to participate in the study completion of the questionnaire and its return on the given time frame indicated their willingness to participate.
The researcher keeping in mind the tentative number of teachers in each school decided on how many questionnaires were to be given but this number was supposed to change when the actual conversation happens between the researcher and school principals. This decided the number of questionnaires to be given to the staff in each school. A simple tentative plan (As shown in Table 4) was developed in deciding the number of questionnaires to be given to each school.

Table 4 Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary school</th>
<th>Number of Staff</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;45 staff</td>
<td>&lt;44 but &gt;35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>160</strong></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows tentative numbers of questionnaires which was planned to be given to various secondary school teachers. The schools which had more than 45 staff were supposed to get 40 questionnaires, schools which had staff number between 44 to 35 were supposed to get 35 questionnaires, school with 34 to 25 staff were supposed to get 20 questionnaires and school with less that 24 staff only were given 15 questionnaire.
Research Instrument

A rating scale type survey questionnaire was used in the study. A rating scale is useful when behaviour, attitude, or other phenomenon of interest needs to be evaluated on a continuum. Rating scales were developed by Rensis Likert in the 1930s to assess people’s attitudes; which are sometimes called Likert scales (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). This approach was based on two previous studies that researched the assessment and grading practices of teachers (Duncan & Noonan, 2007; McMillan, 2001) and the same approach was used by Gurski (2008). The instrument used in this study was borrowed from Gurski’s (2008) study. The permission to use the instrument was communicated through email with Dr. David Mykota, The Department Head of College of Education, of University of Saskatchewan, Canada (See Appendix F for communication email).

The research instrument was divided into three parts for collecting relevant data.

Part I: Demographic data, subject, year level, and number of student

Teachers were asked to consider one of their current subject taught and clearly specify and indicate the students’ year and their level, subject area, number of students taught, number of times the subject is taught by them. They were also asked to state to what extent they are prepared to handle current assessment and grading practices under the following scale: Not at all prepared (1), a little prepared (2), somewhat prepared (3), quite prepared (4), and completely prepared (5).

Part II: Secondary Teachers’ Assessment and Grading Practices Questionnaire

To determine the assessment and grading practices among secondary level classrooms, teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they engage in certain practices or considered certain factors based on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from responses of (1) not at all to (6) completely. This was divided into three sections.

Section A asked teachers to self-report the factors they considered in determining grades.
Section B asked teachers to indicate the types of assessments they use.

Section C specifically focused on the cognitive level engaged by teachers’ in assessment practices.

Part III: Open-Ended Questions

Teachers were asked four open ended questions where they were allowed to give their comments on the current practices. They were asked to comment on the most positive aspects of their assessment practices, their concerns regarding assessment currently done in their schools and general comment which they deemed important to be included in the research.

Instrument Validity

It is very important that the instrument used in the research shows validity because it should measure what it purports to measure. In order to do this, the instrument content validity index (CVI) was calculated. Polit and Beck (2004) stated that validity is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and content validity index (CVI) concerns the degree to which an instrument has an appropriate sample of items for the construct being measured. The process of determining the CVI involves at least 3 experts in the area researched whereby they evaluate and document the (CVI) of the newly developed instrument by computing interrator agreement indexes and a formal content validity index across the experts’ rating of each items relevance, thus a content validity index of .80 or more is generally good content validity (Polit and Beck, 2001).

The examination of the validity of the survey questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of high school teachers and administrators. The panel agreed that that were valid measures and the panel of examiners unanimously had a consensus that the items in this in the questionnaire were sufficiently comprehensive (Duncan & Noonan, 2007). Since, the content validity index (CVI) of the instrument has been ascertained by past researchers, and there was no modification done to the instrument therefore, the CVI was not tested nor was it necessary to do so as this is only done by experts in validity testing.
**Instrument Reliability**

An instrument's reliability is the consistency with which it measures the target attributes it is supposed to be measuring (Polit & Beck, 2004) and an instrument is reliable if it measures actually the true scores of the attribute under investigation (Burns and Grove, 2005). The methods of assessing reliability of the instruments include:

(i) **Stability** – that is concerned with consistency of repeated measures. It is often referred to as test-retest reliability (Burns and Grove, 2005). Furthermore, the stability of an instrument is the extent to which similar results are obtained on two separate occasions (Polit and Beck, 2004). In statistical analysis Product Moment Correlation or Pearson’s ($r$) is calculated whereby the values for correlation may range from -1.00 through .00 to +1.00.

(ii) **Internal consistency** – an instrument is said to be internally consistent or homogenous to the extent that its items measure the same characteristics and one of the oldest methods of assessing the internal consistency is the split-half technique, whereby items on a scale are split into two groups and scored independently (Polit and Beck, 2004).

(iii) **Equivalence** - Burns and Grove, (2005) stated that the focus of equivalence is the comparison of two versions of the paper and pencil instrument or two observers measuring the same event This may occur when different observers or researchers are using the instrument to measure the phenomenon of interest at the same time or when two presumably parallel instruments are administered to individuals at about the same time.

Therefore, reliability testing is considered the measure of the amount of error in the measurement technique and is usually expressed as a form of corelational coefficient where 1.00 indicating perfect reliability, .80 for a well developed measurement tool and .70 for a newly developed instrument (Burns and Grove, 2005). Hence, for this study, the internal consistency reliability of the instrument was tested on twenty (20) secondary school teachers not included in the sample but who had similar characteristics, using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was .90. The other forms of reliability (stability & equivalence) were not tested as it would be cumbersome to the novice researcher; however past researchers have found the internal consistency reliability of the instrument suffice to evidence that the instrument's reliability
is consistent with which it measures the target attribute it is supposed to measure (Polit & Beck, 2004).

**Data collection Methods**

A survey instrument was administered to the teachers which were used to determine the assessment and grading practices amongst secondary level classroom teachers’. A survey instrument is one that captures a fleeting moment in time, much as a camera takes a single frame photograph of an ongoing activity (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Thus, the researcher used this approach as it was based on two previous studies that researched the assessment and grading practices of teachers (Duncan & Noonan, 2007; McMillan, 2001 and later used by Gurski. 2008). Data collection by the investigator involved the following steps:

(i) Submission of the research proposal to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of The South Pacific. After receiving approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the South Pacific, the certificate of ethical clearance, together with the request form to do research in the research settings was forwarded to the Research Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Education. Upon approval by the Ministry of Education, the Permanent Secretary for Education was consulted to endorse data collection from the schools in the research settings.

(ii) Selection of teachers from the list provided by the various school heads.

(iii) Distribution of research packages to the participants with a letter of request for cooperation to complete all the forms in their private times and then return all the completed questionnaires. All participants were requested to put the questionnaires in the return envelope properly sealed and placed in the allocated areas in the school. A reminder was sent out to all the participating schools after two weeks of initial distribution.

(iv) Weekly collection of questionnaires from the schools with the help of assistants who then forwarded them to the researcher.

(v) Screening and reviewing of all returned questionnaires after a month for their completeness before analyzing the data.
The Administration of Questionnaires

The data were collected from secondary school teachers during the last week of August to the last week of September 2014. This particular time was chosen by the researcher because most secondary schools had finished with the internal exams and they were getting ready for the third term teaching program of Term 3 where teachers were busy with the final internal and external exams. The researcher planned not to create disturbance to school programmes by conducting the survey during this term.

The survey questionnaire (refer to Appendix D) was used to gather the data. The questionnaires and information sheet were hand delivered to 11 secondary schools between the Suva and Nausori corridor and a tentative date was set as when it would be collected. During the distribution of the questionnaire the principals were briefly explained the importance of the research and as well as what the research intend to find. The researcher also had some conversation with the staff of some of the secondary schools in regard to the questionnaire completion. This was done only upon the request made by the school principals. The principals were clearly explained that participation of their teachers in the survey was voluntary and responses from one school will not be shared with other schools. The completed questionnaires were kept in the school office and collected on the mutually agreed date given to each of the secondary schools principals. Adequate time was given as requested by principals for filling of the questionnaires.

A total of 350 survey questionnaires were distributed to eleven secondary schools teachers. A total of 215 completed questionnaires were collected. This number represents a 61.43% response rate.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed in two different ways. Part I and II of the data was analysed using descriptive statistics and Part III of the data was analysed using qualitative analysis.
Descriptive Statistics

Part I of the data collected from the questionnaire which included demographic data, subject, year level, number of students, course been taught, preparedness to handle the current assessment and grading practices was tabulated and ranked to make categories. These were analysed using frequency and percentages where applicable.

Part II data from the Secondary Teachers’ Assessment and Grading Practices Questionnaire was analyzed for mean, standard deviation and rank of each part. This was done by entering the data into the SPSS 21 statistical software based on the following values: 1-not at all; 2-very little; 3-some; 4-quite a bit; 5-extensively; 6-completely. The completed data had its mean, standard deviation, and rank of each part (that is: factors used to determine grades, types of assessment used, and cognitive level of assessment) calculated to compare which practices are more evident than others.

Qualitative analysis

Qualitative analysis of the data collected from the open ended questions was analyzed in the following way.

A three column table was made in Microsoft Excel where column 1 had the questionnaire number, column 2 had the question number, and column 3 had the responses gathered from particular participant. Where the respondent did not answer any question the “no response” was written for that particular question for the participant. (Refer to table 5 for sample Qualitative analysis table)
Table 5  Qualitative analysis table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire number</th>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1a, 1b</td>
<td>-The task and CBAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-Not all student give their best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-one or two maximum per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-after analysis feedback is wanted as current assessment practices can be improved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table was used to fill all the responses received from the participants. The order in which the questions were entered did not matter because it was later being sorted out. Once the data was entered in the table it was sorted out by question number.

This enabled all the same question responses to be together from different participants. After this the sorted data was coded according to the ideas that were revealed from the responses of the participants. For instance, questionnaire number 1 was referred as T1, questionnaire number 2 as T2 and so on.

Table 6  Filled qualitative analysis table [sample]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T1</th>
<th>1a</th>
<th>The task and CBAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1b</td>
<td>not all students give their best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>one or two maximum per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>after analysis feedback is wanted as current assessment practices can be improved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The occurrences of similar data from the respondents form categories. Hence, categories were formed and possible pattern was located. From these patterns, any relationship seen in the data and the idea(s) which emerged was discussed.

Research Ethics

Ethical dilemmas and concerns are part of the everyday practice of doing research (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Guillemin and Gillam (2004) stated that ethics is not only
confined to qualitative research or necessarily to research which involves humans but are equally important to quantitative research that involves animals rather than humans directly or indirectly.

On the other hand, Resnik (2011) states five reasons as to why it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. These five reasons are: 1- it promotes the aims of research, 2- it promotes the values that are essential to collaborative work, 3- it makes researchers accountable to the public, 4- it helps in building public support for research and 5- it promotes a variety of other important moral and social values.

Thus, keeping this in mind the researcher planned the following so that all the research ethics are inculcated in the research.

**Protection of human objects**

To guarantee protection of human rights a consent letter stating that participation in the study is voluntary; return of questionnaire; and participant were free to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time from the study without any sort of punishment. A statement also included in the information that guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of the individual responses and information provided by the subjects was used for the purpose of the study only and kept confidential.

Confidentiality of data was maintained by replacing the names on records with an assigned code number and the linkage between code number and subjects on code sheet was only known to the investigator. The coded sheets were stored separately from the collected data to ensure subjects confidentiality. References and description which would make the subject easily identifiable was excluded from any final reports, publications and the presented paper.
CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research and at the same time discusses the findings of both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data collected from the current Fiji secondary school teachers, who teach different subjects at Years 9 to 12 levels based on the three research questions:

1. How do teachers assess and grade their students at secondary school levels in Fiji?

2. What type of assessment, grading factor, and cognitive level is frequently assessed in the current classroom assessment and grading practices of secondary teachers?

3. What are the perceptions of teachers on the current assessment and grading practices of secondary teachers?

The chapter begins with the presentation of analysed demographic data of Part 1 of the teacher’s questionnaire. Following this are the presentation and discussion of factors used in determining grades, types of assessment practices used, cognitive levels of assessment (Part 2 of surveyed questionnaire) and towards the end of the chapter, a brief discussion of the findings derived from qualitative analysis of open ended questions (Part 3 of questionnaire) is presented. (Refer to Appendix D for Parts 1, 2 & 3 of teachers’ questionnaire). The summary of the findings concludes this chapter.

INTERPRETATION OF TEACHERS’ QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey results

The data from the survey was entered in excel software before it was entered in SPSS 21 software. The Demographic Data (Part 1) and open ended answers (Part 3) was entered and analysed in the excel software whereas the Likert scale data (Part 2) was entered in
the SPSS 21 software [refer to appendix 1 for teacher’s questionnaire]. The results are categorised as:

- demographic data;
- factors used in determining grades;
- types of assessments used;
- cognitive levels of assessments and
- open ended responses.

**Demographic Data**

The current secondary school teachers of selected schools were asked to select the year level and also select one subject that they are currently teaching for which they were asked to answer the questionnaire sheet given. Teachers were given the liberty to choose which subject they wanted to answer the question even though they may be teaching two or more subjects. The results of this data are summarised in Table 7.

**Table 7: Number of teachers who teach various levels and subjects in the selected secondary schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of responses by Year and subject</th>
<th>Maths</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>Pemac</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Year Stated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Per Subject</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The collected data showed that most of the teachers who took part in the survey questionnaire were from Year 9 (n=71) and the subject for which the greatest number of teachers took part was for others (n= 62) followed by English (n=43). One more category was added during data analysis as “No Year Stated” because a few (n=5) did not state any Year level that they were teaching when they answered the questionnaire.

Table 8: Frequency and percentage of students per class as taught by the subject teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students taught</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 35</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>69.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in this table, the majority of the teachers’ (69.30%) indicated that they teach more than 35 students in the class, 13.49% indicated they have 26-35 students in the class, 12.10% indicated that they have 15-25 students in the class, while only eleven (5.12%) teachers’ indicated that they have less than 15 students in their respective class.

The above result was anticipated as the research area is an urban setting and most schools have bigger numbers in the class.

Table 9 shows that the majority of secondary school teachers (n=188, 87.44%) have taught the course selected earlier, more than three times and on the other hand only a small percentage of secondary school teachers (3.26%, n=7) indicated that they have taught the course only once whereas three teachers (n=3, 1.40%) did not give respond to this question.
Table 9: Frequency and percentage of teachers who have taught course as how many times per subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three or more</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>87.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high number of teachers indicating that they have taught the course three or more times was not surprising as the urban setting surveyed in this study normally attracts experienced teachers who have served outer islands or rural schools. It’s a norm that many teachers in their first three years of teaching are sent to rural setting before being posted to town schools.

The second last question in this part of the survey asked secondary school teachers to indicate whether they have done any university courses on classroom assessment. As shown in Table 10, the majority (n= 176, 81.86%) of teachers indicated they have done some university course on classroom assessment whereas thirty one teachers (14.42%) indicated that they have taken no course in this regard. However, eight teachers (3.72%) did not respond to the question (see Table 10).

Table 10: Frequency and percentage of secondary school teacher who have done university course in assessment and grading practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>81.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Response</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clearly indicated here that many teachers have taken some course(s) at university in assessment. This shows that universities are preparing their teachers conduct assessments in schools.

A question in part 1 of the questionnaire also asked secondary school teachers to indicate to what extent they are prepared to handle the current assessment and grading practices. Results on this are shown in Table 11.

**Table 11: Frequency showing level of preparedness of teachers’ in handling current assessment and grading practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of preparedness</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all prepared</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little prepared</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat prepared</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite prepared</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely prepared</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in this table, the majority (n=123) of the teachers surveyed indicated that they are “*quite prepared*” to handle the current assessment followed by forty nine teachers (n=49) who stated that they are “*completely prepared*” to handle the current assessment. On the other hand the results also indicates that thirty one (n=31) teachers are “*somewhat prepared*” and eleven teachers (n=11) are “*a little prepared*” to handle current assessment respectively. However, none of the teachers indicated that they are “*not at all prepared*” to handle the current assessment.
A graphic representation of the tabulated data converted into percentage is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Bar Graph Showing the percentage of teachers on their different level of preparedness to handle current assessment and grading practices

From this graphic representation, it can be seen that most of the secondary school teachers are quite prepared to use the current assessment and grading practices. In addition, satisfactory percentages (22.79%) of teachers’ are completely prepared for the assessment at hand. It is clearly evident that teachers in secondary schools are competent to handle assessment. The majority of teachers indicated that they are quite prepared. This is a good sign as it gives confidence that assessment is properly done at the secondary schools concluded in this study.

Factors Used in Determining Grades

In Part 2 of the teachers’ questionnaire (Section A) the survey asked teachers to indicate the factors they considered in determining grades based on a six point Likert scale. The
results collected from the survey was entered in a SPSS 21 software based on the following values: 0- no response, 1- not at all, 2- very little, 3- some, 4- quite a bit, 5- extensively, and 6- completely. A new category was added that is 0- no response during data analysis process for those teachers who did not answer the questions and those who gave two or more answers which made the responses collected invalid.

Table 12 shows the frequency, mean, standard deviation and rank of the practices surveyed in the questionnaire. The practice which received the highest rank as surveyed was: Specific learning objectives mastered (1), followed by Performance compared to a scale of percentage correct (2), academic performance as opposed to other factors in determining grades (3). The least used practices amongst the teachers were: Inclusion of zeros for incomplete assignments in the determination of final percentage correct (1), Extra credit for non-academic performance (2), grade distributions of other teachers (3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Performance compared to a scale of percentage correct</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Specific learning objectives mastered</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>1.151</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Academic performance as opposed to other factors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.128</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Inclusion of zeros for incomplete assignments in the determination of final percentage correct</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.703</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ability levels of the students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.122</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Student effort- how much the student tried to learn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.339</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Quality of completed homework (Graded)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.259</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Degree to which the students pays attention and/or participates in class</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.317</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Completion of homework (not graded)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.318</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Effort, improvement, behaviour and other “nontest” indicators for border line cases</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.310</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Improved performance since the beginning of the year</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.254</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Work habits and neatness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.228</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Extra credit for academic Performance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.322</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Performance compared to other students in the class</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.378</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Disruptive student Performance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.407</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Extra credit for non-academic performance (e.g., bringing items for the food drive)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.513</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Formal or informal school or division policy of the percentage of students who may obtain A’s, B’s, C’s, D’s and F’s/or B,s, P,s and A,s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.510</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Performance compared to students from previous years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.476</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Grade distributions of other teachers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.609</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Policy in National Curriculum Assessment and Reporting (2011) stated that if judgements of student achievement are consistent and fair, they need to be based on the integration of many kinds and sources of evidence collected in various situations over a period of time. The analysis of the data showed that teachers in secondary schools used various factors as mentioned in the questionnaire in determining grades for the students. This is an indication that teachers at secondary schools are consistent with the policy of Ministry of Education in Fiji. It is worth noting that most teachers in the study showed that they rely on specific learning objectives mastered for determining grades for their students.

Table 12 shows that specific learning objectives mastered has a highest mean (4.49) compared to the other indicators. This shows that most of the teachers depend on learning objectives mastered as one of the common factors in determining grades. Majority of the indicators in determining grades have a mean over three indicates that other factors are used in determining grades by teachers but at the same time it indicates that these factors are not given the same preference as others.

Duncan and Nooman (2007) asserted that classroom assessment requires more rigorous application of measurement concepts. The study also showed that these secondary school teachers give more priority to few of the factors compared to other factors in determining grades. The level of importance given to each of the factors varied amongst teachers which tends to point out that there is inconsistency between the practices carried out amongst teachers.

There is an indication that some of the grading practices are given more preference than others. Since there is a policy by the Ministry of Education that various grading evidences are to be used by teachers when judging students performance, this could be the reason why secondary teachers rely on many grading practices. This calls for the review of the policy as it may be creating fragmentation between students performance as they may be graded differently by different teachers in their schools.
Types of assessments used

Section B of Part 2 of the teachers’ questionnaire had eleven questions (items 20-30) where it asked teachers to indicate their current assessment practices. The same Likert scale survey instrument was used as in previous section where no response category was also included as few teachers did not respond to the question asked. The results are tabulated in Table 13.

Table 13: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank for types of assessments used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. Assessments designed primarily by yourself</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>1.291</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Performance Quizzes</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.308</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Objective assessments (e.g. Multiple choice, matching, short answers)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>1.188</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Essay-type questions</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.672</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Performance assessments (e.g. structured teacher observations or ratings of performance such as a speech or paper)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.448</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Projects completed by individual students</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>1.355</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Major exams</td>
<td>2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>1.311</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Authentic assessments (e.g. “real world” performance tasks)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.364</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Projects completed in teams of students</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.311</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Assessment provided by publishers of supplied to the teacher (e.g., in instructional guides or manuals)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.360</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Oral presentation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.425</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 13, the most widely used assessment practices was: major exams (1), followed by objective assessments (2), assessments designed primarily by yourself (3). On
the other hand the least used practices were: *essay type questions* (1), *performance assessments* (2), and *oral presentation* (3). The mean score in this section did not vary widely as it ranges from 3.66 to 4.85. All the assessment was used by the teachers. However, none of the practice was completely used by all the teachers.

Nigeria, Afemikhe and Omo- Egbekuse (n.d) suggested that teachers need to develop a pool of test items to counter the constraints anticipated in classroom assessment. As anticipated the study revealed that secondary teachers used diverse forms of assessment in their classroom.

However, the study by Susuwele-Banda (2005) from the Malawi experience reveals that teachers perceived assessment as testing, and classroom assessment as not a fundamental part in their teaching. This was revealed when most of the secondary school teachers selected the commonly used assessment type as major exams followed by objective assessments and assessment designed by the teacher in the school. This shows more attention is given by teachers towards only testing students through paper test whereas authentic and diagnostics assessment are given less importance.

In addition, Alkharusi (2008) claims that there is no evidence of teachers frequently using the recommended assessment practice. In a similar note, Rahman et al. (2011) stated that teachers frequently asked closed ended questions which were from the lowest level of cognitive domain. This practice may be the indication of teachers in this study opting for an easy form of assessment or they prefer the traditional form of assessment which they are comfortable with as they did that when they were in schools. In fact, the data indicated that the least used assessment tool was essay type questions when in this study forty three English teachers (second highest compared to other subjects) took part in the study. This also indicated that teachers in this study relied on these easy forms of assessment because of the heavy load teachers are taking particularly using the classroom based assessment as it requires most of their time doing paper work which is coupled with the heavy load of students they are taking in their classes as shown in Table 8. The use of the easy form of assessment such as the exam type and the use of objective assessment types such as multiple choices, matching and short answer questions is a reflection of this since long answer questions, essays and oral presentations usually require considerable work for the
teachers to assess. Furthermore, this is an indication that the quality of teaching and learning is affected. This in turn affects the quality of students coming out from secondary level to tertiary level such as university.

On the other hand, the major annual exam is the only assessment tool that all schools are using. The other assessment tool used in schools differs in each school which leads to inconsistency between schools performance. This is an indication that some schools may retort to easier assessments tools to better their school results. This reduces the validity and reliability of the assessment done in secondary schools. However, this is not the case when external assessments are done as it is uniform throughout the nation. Thus, to increase the reliability and validity of the assessment the curriculum should be more specific and instruction should be given as what assessment tools to be used and to what extent. This may also be the indication of more professional development for teachers in this area so that assessments are designed in a more consistent way in all the secondary schools.

**Cognitive level of assessments**

The last section of *Part 2 (section C)* of the questionnaire has items 31-34 questions where teachers were asked to indicate the cognitive level of assessment that is currently used in their schools. The same 6 point Likert scale was used as in previous sections where a *no response* (represented by 0) category was also added as few teachers did not answer the question.
Table 14: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank for cognitive level of assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. Assessments that measure student understanding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.032</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Assessments that measure how well students apply what they learn</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.164</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Assessments that measure students reasoning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>1.101</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Assessments that measure student recall knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>1.129</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers indicated that the most commonly used assessment is that which measure students’ understanding and least commonly used assessment is that which measures students reasoning. The mean score in this section has no significant difference (4.47-4.69) as it can be seen in Table 14. There is indication that teachers are using the modern practices of assessment as learnt in the teacher training program in their current assessment and grading practices.

An attempt was made to identify which cognitive level of assessment is frequently used by secondary teachers. Rahman et al. (2011) stated that teachers frequently asked closed questions which were from the lowest level of cognitive domain. However, the study found that teachers mostly use assessment that measures students understanding followed by assessment that allows students to apply their knowledge to learn. Hence, it indicates that secondary school teachers are adequately using modern practices of assessment designing and implementation in their day to day practices. This is the reflection of what Table 10 shows where the majority of the teachers have indicated in the study that they have done university courses in assessment. It is why most of these teachers are using modern practices in their assessment process and procedures.
Open Ended Responses

The question number 1 in this section had two parts [refer to Appendix D]. The first part of the question asked teachers’ to state the most positive aspects in their current assessment and grading practices. Teachers in regards to this question came up with various answers. A group of teachers (23.7%, n=51) describes the assessment and grading practices as student centred. Teachers stated that the current assessment is able to locate the weaker learners which enables learners to identify their strengths and weakness. This enables the students to work on areas which they are weak at. In addition, forty seven (21.7%) teachers indicated that the most positive part of the assessment that is currently done in the schools is that it is more practical, project based, task and CBAs included, researched based, group worked with inclusion of exams and internal short test. A small number (between 1% to 10%) of teachers made some brief comments on the current assessment. Some examples of their comments are stated below:

… it is objective based….. [T173, T176]

… it is ongoing [T48]

... it promotes high order thinking [T284]

… it identifies the recall knowledge [T347]

… it allows no failure… [T46]

… it is continuous… and consistent [T80, T301, T245, T250, T103]

… it identifies each student understanding… relate it to the real life situations [T28, T205]

… the holistic development of the child gets assessed… [T 41, T192, T212]

… it shows how much the child knows [T262]

… it enables a child to complete twelve years of education [T92, T109]

… it checks students’ progress [T105]
… it allows students to be creative and enable them to do things on their own… [T200, T194]

However, fourteen (n=14, 6.5%) of teachers did not choose to answer this question.

It is clear from the findings that teachers are quite positive about the current assessment in secondary schools. For example the teachers defined the current assessment as student centred, practical based, project based, objective based, ongoing, develop learners holistically, continuous and consistent, lifelong learning is adapted, group work with inclusion of examination and internal short test. This is a clear indication that secondary teachers are valuing the assessment at hand as they have seen its benefits in the current assessments.

The second part of question 1 asked teachers to state their views as what are the problems and concerns in the assessment and grading practices. A group of teachers (n=25, 11.63%) indicated that the major problem is absenteeism of children. In addition, another group of teachers (n=15, 7.0%) indicated their concern about the large class size which makes it impossible for some of the assessment activities to be carried out as required whereas thirty two (14.9%) teachers highlighted their concern on time constraint that is to many task to be done in short period of time and nineteen (8.8%) teachers rose their concern on extra documentation that is currently needed when carrying out these assessments tasks.

There were a small number of teachers who mentioned different concerns and problems when they were confronted with these current assessments. Problem such as the lack of resources, too many assessment, and plagiarism by students, unmotivated learners, and unclear progress reports of students were identified. Some examples of the comments made by the teachers in this regard were:

…. lack of resources [T186]

….number of assessment is too many [T107]

….students applies ideas from other students/school. They cut and paste readymade ideas from internet [T22]
... students take IA very lightly [T66, T339]

... lack of incentives by the students and motivation [T89]

... students are not exposed to examinable types of questions [T350, T346]

... in group work, not everyone fully participates, some take free rides but still tend to be awarded good marks because they are grouped [T317]

... not allowed to give zero therefore those who do not do their work on time still have to be given marks [T55]

... current assessment is not good method of assessment because it shows a false picture of students. The CBA lifts the school grade even if the child has failed badly in the exam [T230]

Five teachers [T49, T155, T160, T164, and T348] rather than giving their concern and problems with current assessment indicated that internal assessment should be replaced with exams. Five teachers [T33, T36, T44, T304, and T312] indicated that there is no problem in the current assessment and grading practices. There were 8.8% (n=19) who did not response to this question.

The study revealed some problems and concerns about the current assessment. For example, teachers stated that current assessment has the major problem of absenteeism and they raised concerns on lack of resources, time constraint, large class size, huge number of task, copying of task, negative attitude towards task by students, and lack of incentive for students to try harder. This is an indication that there are some tethering problems in the current assessment. However, the problems mentioned are long term problems which will require considerable effort and energy but it cannot be ignored because it is affecting the current secondary school teachers in their day to day practices.

Question 2 of this section asked teachers to state to what extent the peer and self assessment is used which was not included in the survey. A group of teachers (n=18, 8.4%) used the term extensively to answer this question. Other examples of the responses that were made by the teachers were:
…quite a bit [T56, T86, T106, T107, T183, T243, T255, T256, T257, T258, T281, T290, T308, T349]

… to some extent [T48, T242, T318, T327]

… when need arises [T23, T81, T89, T90, T91, T189]

… when individual assessments are carried out [T33, T35, T36, T63]

… once or twice in a term, depending on the activity [T15, T177]

… on weaker students [T104]

… as homework [T64, T70]

… during revision [T109]

… when doing group work [T202, T204, T205, T300]

Seven teachers (n=7, 3.3%) indicated that they don’t use this assessment at all. However, there were (n=38, 17.7%) teachers who did not respond to this question.

Peer and self assessment are good strategies that a teacher can use in the classroom in the development of autonomous responsible and reflective individuals (Sambell & McDowell, 1998; Sluijsmans, & Moerkerke 1998). It is alarming to note that teachers at secondary level are given little attention to these important strategies. Hence, it is important that some policy is made which dictates the teachers to use these strategies efficiently in their classroom.

Question 3 of the questionnaire (refer to Appendix D for the questionnaire) asked current secondary school teachers to make any general comments and suggestions on their current assessment and grading practices in their schools. A group of teachers (n=34, 28.6%) out of one hundred and nineteen who answered this question indicated that they would prefer that the exams in secondary levels should be brought back.

A small group and at times only one teacher indicated that curriculum should be student centred, assessment should be reviewed, class numbers should be reduced, more
professional development for teachers, task numbers should be reduced, schools should become resourceful and continuous monitoring and evaluation of current practices is needed to better the current assessment and grading practices. Some examples of the response from the teachers were:

… current curriculum should be student centred [T8]

… current assessment should be reviewed [T12, T13, T14, T253, T256]

… class size to be reduced [ T29, T51,T311]

… more workshop for teachers are needed [T37, T219, T242]

… use same assessment in every school [T105]

… reduce the number of task in every subject [T107, T278]

…. reduce paper work [T187]

…. more resources should be available to teachers for better practices [T242, T349]

… current assessment is good but more monitoring and evaluation is needed [T102]

There were (n=96, 44.7%) of secondary school teachers’ who did not respond to this question 3 in the questionnaire.

The study makes it clear that teachers have some genuine concerns. Some of the concern mentioned by teachers were: i) exams should be brought back, ii) current assessment should be reviewed, iii) class size should be reduced, iv) more workshops for teachers to be organised, v) paper work should be reduced and appropriate resources should be made available to the teachers.

Hence, from the views expressed by teachers it becomes clear that teachers in secondary schools are managing the current assessment and grading practices well but there are indication that few important changes are necessary to better suit the current assessment and grading practices in secondary school classrooms.
Summary of the Research Findings

From the perspectives of the 215 secondary school teachers surveyed in this research, it seemed clear that the current teachers in the secondary school under study-

- are using various methods of assessment and grading practices which seem to be affected by the factors such as class size.
- use exams as the major form of grading students.
- prefer assessment which measures’ specific learning outcomes to grade their students.
- mostly use assessment that measure students understanding.
- view the current assessment as good.
- mentioned that little alteration to the current assessment practices will better the situation.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In discussing this chapter, I will first of all address the three research questions set out to be answered for this particular research and try to answer these questions according to the findings discussed in the previous chapter. I will then discuss the implication of the research based on the findings before I end the chapter with some recommendations to better the situation.

The three research questions that were asked at the beginning are:

- How do teachers assess and grade their students at secondary school levels in Fiji?

- What type of assessment, grading factor, and cognitive level is frequently assessed in the current classroom assessment and grading practices of secondary teachers?

- What are the perceptions of teachers on the current assessment and grading practices of secondary teachers?

At the end of the study it was evident that current teachers in secondary schools in Fiji are using various methods of assessment and grading practices. Teachers are using exams as the major form of assessment. The other forms of assessments are also used by teachers at some extend but usage in its preference differs amongst teachers at various schools. The specific objective mastered assessments are mostly used by teachers to grade their students. Study also shows teachers do utilise other indicators also in determining grades. It can be said that variation amongst teachers in assessment process was noted.

Teachers are utilising assessment which mostly measure students understanding. Teachers view the current assessment and grading practices as relevant provided a little alternation is done to it. The assessment and grading practices of secondary school teachers in the area of study seem competent and teachers are also managing the current
assessment and grading practices at hand (before 2015) quite well. Secondary teachers in this area of study should be commended as they have taken on board some modern assessment and grading practices as desired. For example, teachers have utilised the high order cognitive levels in their practices. The positiveness in the comments made by teachers in the study showed that these teachers are using the best from the assessment and grading practices even though some problems and concern were raised by them.

The study also revealed some area of concern as far as assessment and grading practices are concern even though it was not primarily researched by the researcher. Importantly, the study shows that the assessment and grading practices of secondary school teachers lack consistency amongst their own practices. For example, when teachers were asked to grade the type of assessment used and factors used in determining grades, few teachers used one practice completely while others stated the different level of preferences for that particular practice. Moving on, it was worth noting that few teachers are not as proficient with the current assessment and grading practices as they stated their different level of preparedness to held current assessment. On the other hand, few teachers also stated lack of academic qualification in handling the current practices.

Furthermore, the findings also submit certain recommendations for achieving better assessment and grading practices. These include reduction in the number of students in the classroom, more necessary resources to be provided, the current assessment to be reviewed, more workshop for teachers to be organised and paper work should be reduced for classroom teachers. Given these, it implicates that there is a need to relook at the current assessment and grading practices in secondary schools to better the entire education system in the country.

To conclude, the findings of the study are beneficial as it has illuminated some current issues pertaining to the assessment and grading practices in the secondary schools. It has also provided a vital context for increasing our understanding as what the secondary school teachers are facing when it comes to these practices. It is further believed that the findings will allow necessary changes to be adapted in the assessment and grading practices and possibly this can eradicate all the downfalls that are faced currently by the secondary school teachers.
Implication of the study

The study had the following implications:

1. Collection and analysis of information showed some interesting trends which led to further research where this research can be used as a basis for designing policies and decision making in improving educational assessment practices in future.

2. The assessment reform brought a lot of changes in the way the assessment was carried out in the classroom in the past. Hence, this research revealed the factors which influence the teachers’ assessment and grading practices before the examination was reintroduced.

3. The importance of classroom assessment and grading techniques that are meaningful, appropriate, and useful is crucial in enhancing learning for all the students. By gaining better understanding of the current extent to which regular classroom educators utilized assessment principles that enhanced learning, this study provided opportunities for increased professional development resources, support for more collaborative educational practices, or future consideration of best practices to meet the needs of students.

Recommendations

The findings revealed some immediate concerns which can be solve in a short term while some concerns can only be solved over long term planning with the availability of resources. Some of these recommendations may not directly relate to the research findings but it came up during data analysis. Hence, after going through the research findings the researcher would like to make the following recommendations.

- The current assessment policy should be reviewed and some specific instructions should be included as to what practices are to be carried out by teachers and to what extent. This policy should be used by all teachers to maintain uniformity amongst their practices.
- More workshops should be organised for teachers on assessment where the opportunity should be given to those teachers who lack this vital knowledge. Some teachers should be also given chance to go for in-service training if they have not done course on assessment during teacher training.
- A survey should be carried out annually by the Ministry of Education [MOE] where teachers are asked to state what their concerns are and what resources are immediately needed so that teachers feel included and assessment practices are better implemented.
- The class size of teachers should be reduce which will enable teachers to have enough time and resources to better assess and grade students.

It is clear that assessment and grading practices form the integral part of secondary schools. The twenty first century classrooms now demand more innovative strategies to be used. Thus, this also commands twenty first century teachers to be equipped with more comprehensive assessment and grading practices. Hence, the path which teachers choose today will inference tomorrow’s learners.
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

Research Title: The current Fiji Secondary school teachers’ classroom assessment and grading practices.

My name is Mr. Ajay Mehta. I am a Masters in Education student at the University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus. I am also a Registered Teacher and have worked in primary schools for Ministry of Education for past 8 years.

Invitation: You are invited to participate in this research titled “The current Fiji Secondary school teachers’ classroom assessment and grading practices.” You have been invited to participate in this research because you are a secondary school teacher currently working in one of the secondary school which lies near the Suva Nausori corridor where the intended research is carried out.

What is the main purpose of this study?

The main purpose of this study is find out what are the current assessment and grading practices of secondary schools teachers in Fiji.

How was I chosen to participate in this study?

The researcher utilized a purposeful sample of all the three hundred fifty secondary school teachers from the respective schools which lie within three kilometres from the Suva Nausori highway. Participants were specifically selected who teach Year 9 to 12.

What is the procedure?

Participation in this study will require the participants to complete the questionnaire sheet given which is divided into three parts. Part 1 and 2 requires the participants to shade the appropriate number and part 3 requires open answers to the questions. Filling of the form takes about 10 – 15 minutes of your time.
What are the benefits?

As a participant in this study, you may not receive any direct benefit but the information you provide will help identify the current assessment and grading practices which may later be used to design appropriate strategies to better the situation.

Number of Subjects: You will be one of the 350 teachers participating in this study.

What are the risks?

There are no risks anticipated.

What about confidentiality?

All information will be kept confidential. Do not write your name or give any identifying lettering or symbols in the questionnaire. The only individual who will have access to the questionnaire will be my thesis advisors, and I. Individual information on these questionnaires will remain confidential. Only group results will be provided upon completion of this research. Participation is voluntary; hence you may answer the questionnaire without any fear of supervisory perception or retaliation. Participation or non-participation will not affect your job in any way.

Data collection and Storage:

On completion of filling the questionnaire please, put in the return envelope in the package and deposit into the school office.

All data will be kept confidential and secure and under storage for safe keeping for 5 years after which it will be destroyed. Only the people working with the study will see the data, unless required by law.

Additional Information: Any other benefits or copyrights that may be the result of this project must be in accordance with the rules and regulations of the University of the South Pacific.
Contact Information:

If you have any question regarding this study please contact the following individuals:

1. Primary Investigator - Mr. Ajay Mehta
   Phone: 9772393
   Email: ajay82110@yahoo.com

2. Major advisor - Dr Mesake Rawadikela Dakuidreketi
   Phone: 3232694
   Email: rawadikela_m@usp.ac.fj

For related problems or questions regarding your rights as a participant /subject please contact:

Chair for the School of Education Research Committee - Prof. Konai Helu Thaman
Email: thaman_k@usp.ac.fj
Phone: 3232357

(Primary Investigator)

Mr. Ajay Mehta [s11014196]

Masters of Education – (Candidate)

Faculty of Arts, Law and Education – The University of the South Pacific

Date: ..........................
Appendix B: Confidentiality Agreement

Researcher’s Name: Ajay Mehta
Contact address: P.O.Box 6900, Nasinu.
PH: 9772393
Date: _____________

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Project: The current Fiji Secondary school teachers’ classroom assessment and grading practices.

I agree to keep confidential all information concerning this project. I shall not retain or copy any information about this project.

NAME (please print): ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Date: _____________________
Appendix C: Request Letter

P. O.Box 6900
Valelevu
Nasinu

The Permanent Secretary for Education
Suva
Fiji

Dear Madam

Re: Letter of Request for conducting research

I am presently enrolled in a master’s program in the School of Education at the University of the South Pacific and I am planning my mini thesis research in partial fulfilment of my Masters of Education degree.

The topic of my study is “The current Fiji Secondary school teachers’ classroom assessment and grading practices” The purpose of my study is to examine the current classroom assessment and grading practices utilized by secondary classroom teachers. As a researcher, my specific intent is to administer a questionnaire to high school teachers between Suva and Nausori corridor that will allow them to indicate their current assessment and grading practices.

Attached is a copy of the questionnaire to be administered. Participation is voluntary and data will be gathered anonymously. The presentation of the resulting data in aggregated form will ensure the anonymity of individual participants. I estimate that the time required to complete the questionnaire will be approximately 20 minutes or less. Results will be made available to all participating schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am looking forward for a favourable reply.

Yours Sincerely

____________________
Ajay Mehta
PH: 9772393
Appendix D: Survey Questionnaire
Assessment and Grading Practices of Secondary Classroom Teachers

Thank you for taking time to complete this short questionnaire which is based on assessment practices for one of the courses you teach. In order to assure anonymity, please do not put your name or the name of your school on the survey. By completing the questionnaire it is understood that you do so voluntarily and that you consent to use of your response in the study. The survey contains three parts:

**Part 1: Background Information**

**Part 2:** 34 selected response questions. Please clearly indicate your response by shading the bubble completely. Please do not use checkmarks (√) or an (x).

*Example: In responding to this survey, I am doing so for (select one):*

- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Science
- Prac. Arts

**Part 3** Open Ended Questions.

**Part 1:** Instructions: In responding to the following questions, please do so thinking about one course you are currently teaching or have taught recently.

1. **In responding to this questionnaire, I am doing so for (select one):**

   - Year 9
   - Year 10
   - Year 11
   - Year 12

2. **In responding to this questionnaire, I am doing so for Subject/Course (select one):**

   - Maths
   - Vocational
   - English
   - PEMAC
   - Science
   - Others
   - Arts

5. **Have you taken any university courses in classroom assessment (i.e measurement and evaluation)?**

   - Yes
   - No
3. Number of students in the class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 15</th>
<th>15-25</th>
<th>26-35</th>
<th>More than 35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. How many times have you taught this course?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Once</th>
<th>Twice</th>
<th>Three times or more</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Part 2: Please shade the bubble for the response that best matches your practices, based on the grade and course you identified in Part 1.

A. Factors you use in determining grades

1. Performance compared to a scale of percentage correct

2. Specific learning objectives mastered

3. Academic performance as opposed to other factors

4. Inclusion of zeros for incomplete assignments in the determination of final percentage correct

5. Ability levels of the students

6. Student effort- how much the student tried to learn

7. Quality of completed homework (Graded)

6. To what extent are you prepared to handle current assessment and grading practices?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all prepared</th>
<th>A little prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat prepared</th>
<th>Quite prepared</th>
<th>Completely prepared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<tr>
<td>8. Degree to which the students pays attention and/or participates in class</td>
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<td>9. Completion of homework (not graded)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Effort, improvement, behaviour and other “nontest” indicators for border line cases</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Improved performance since the beginning of the year</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Work habits and neatness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Extra credit for academic Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Performance compared to other students in the class</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Disruptive student Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Extra credit for nonacademic performance (e.g., bringing items for the food drive)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Formal or informal school or division policy of the percentage of students who may obtain A’s, B’s, C’s, D’s and F’s/or B,s, P,s and A,s</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. Performance compared to students from previous years

19. Grade distributions of other teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Types of assessments you use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. Assessments designed primarily by yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Performance Quizzes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Objective assessments (e.g. Multiple choice, matching, short answers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Essay-type questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Performance assessments (e.g. structured teacher observations or ratings of performance such as a speech or paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Projects completed by individual students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Major exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Authentic assessments (e.g. “real world” performance tasks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Projects completed in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teams of students

29. Assessment provided by publishers of supplied to the teacher (e.g., in instructional guides or manuals)

30. Oral presentation

C. Cognitive level of assessments

31. Assessments that measure student understanding

32. Assessments that measure how well students apply what they learn

33. Assessments that measure students reasoning

34. Assessments that measure student recall knowledge

Part 3: Please respond to each of the open ended questions based on the level and course you identified in Part 1. Use extra sheet of paper if you require more space for the answer.

1. a) In your view, what are the most positive aspects of your current assessment and grading practices?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

b) What do you view as problems or concerns (if any)?
2. To what extent do you use peer assessment or self assessment (or other types of assessments not included in this survey) as part of grading students achievement?

3. General comments or suggestions?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Appendix E: Research Letter

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, NATIONAL HERITAGE, CULTURE & ARTS
Quality Education for Change, Peace and Progress

Our Reference: RA 36/14

Date: 29th August 2014

Mr Ajay Mehta
Ministry of Education
Fiji.

Re: Official Approval to Conduct Research in Fiji

Dear Mr Mehta

We are pleased to inform you that the approval for the request to conduct research in Fiji has been granted on the topic: "The Current Fiji Secondary School Teachers’ Classroom Assessment and Grading Practices."

The approval is granted from August to December 2014 as specified in your request.

It is also noted that in this research, you and your team will be working closely with the Suva and Nausori Education Office who would be assisting you with facilitating your research. Please liaise with the relevant personnel and organizations with regards to the logistics and the conduct of your research and be further advised that the Government of Fiji’s legislations, procedures, policies and protocols must be unreservedly adhered to. Since your research includes teachers in school, you are to register with the Fiji Teacher Registration Board.

As a condition for the research approval, a copy of the final research report must be submitted to the Ministry of Education (MoE) through this office upon completion, before the commencement of any publication. Only after the MoE Research & Ethics Council has endorsed the report, shall you be allowed to do any publication of the report. The report will be reserved in the MoE Research Library and will be availed for reference by Senior Ministry and Government officials.

Moreover, it is important to note that the Ministry of Education reserves a right to publish the final report or an edited summary of it.

We further wish you success in your research project.

Parmeshwar Mohan (Mr)
for Permanent Secretary for Education, National Heritage, Culture & Arts.

cc. MoE Research File
PEO Suva
PEO Nausori

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, NATIONAL HERITAGE, CULTURE & ARTS
Appendix F: Ethics Approval

FALE 04/14

Ajay Mehta
Student ID: S1104196
School of Education
Lauala Campus
USP

By: Human Ethics Application

The human ethics application for the following research project has been approved by the FALE Research Committee.

Title: The Current Fiji Secondary School Teachers’ Classroom Assessment and Practices

Principal Researchers: Ajay Mehta

School Division: School of Education

Supervisor: Dr. Mesiaki Kavika

The stated values and principles apply to all University activities, to all its staff and students researchers including those visiting for short periods, and to any research agreements or partnerships that the University establishes. The University’s human ethics will be compliant with the laws of individual University member states, particularly in relation to privacy, confidentiality, ownership, intellectual property requirements, research permit requirements and human rights.

All research conducted by persons affiliated with the University of the South Pacific will be carried out only with the prior, free, and informed consent of all persons concerned, whether individuals or communities, based on adequate information. The consent may be withdrawn by a particular individual or community at any time for any reason without disadvantage or penalty.

Where research involving human subjects/participants is proposed by a researcher at the University of the South Pacific, agreement must be obtained from a fraction of those subjects or their spokespersons in advance of the proposal being submitted to the University Research Ethics Committee, who will require written evidence of such an agreement.

Where appropriate, this must be translated into a language that is readily comprehensible by potential participants. The rights and interests must be emphasised, their questions all satisfactorily answered.

Congratulations and all the best for your research project.

Dr. Cherie Frances Keqa vakarum
Associate Dean - Research & Internationalisation
Faculties of Arts, Law & Education
University of the South Pacific

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW & EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC
PRIVATE MAIL BAG, SUVA, FIJI
Ph: (679) 323 2368 Fax: (679) 333 1552
Appendix G: Communication E-mail

Subject: Re: Permission
From: Ajay Mehta (ajay82110@yahoo.com)
To: patricia.gillies@usask.ca;
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2014 8:07 PM

Thank you Madam.

It would be great pleasure to use work of your institution, and I will ensure that all proper reference of the work is given to acknowledge it.

Once again thank you.

Ajay

On Thursday, March 6, 2014 5:32 AM, "Gillies, Patricia" <patricia.gillies@usask.ca> wrote:
Ajay, you would be able to use the thesis as a reference ensuring proper citation was used. (I’d say it’s a compliment to the author 🙂)

Patricia Gillies
College of Education, Graduate Programs Office
UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
28 Campus Dr, 3360 Education Building
Saskatoon SK S7N 0X1
Email: patricia.gillies@usask.ca
www.usask.ca/education

From: Ajay Mehta [mailto:ajay82110@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 05, 2014 3:43 AM
To: Gillies, Patricia
Subject: Permission
Greetings.
This is Ajay Mehta from Fiji. I am sending this email to humbly request permission from the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research to grant me permission to use Lisa Francine Gurski thesis (Titled: Secondary Teachers assessment and grading practices in inclusive classroom) for my study in Fiji. I intent to use the thesis partially precisely the instrument and conceptual framework. My research title will be Secondary Teachers classroom assessment and grading practices, The Republic of Fiji.

This thesis is my partial completion of masters program at University of the South Pacific.

Looking forward for a favorable reply.

Thanking you in advance.

Ajay Mehta
REFERENCES


