

**Student Empowerment through Instructors' Assessment
Practices at a University in Ethiopia**

by

ABATIHUN ALEHEGN SEWAGEGN

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Supervisor: Professor P Marais

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DECLARATION

Student Number: 49024647

I declare that **Student Empowerment through Instructors' Assessment Practices at a University in Ethiopia** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



January 5, 2016

ABATIHUN ALEHEGN SEWAGEGN

Date

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ABSTRACT

In developing countries like Ethiopia, education is considered to be a means of development and a stepping stone toward the eradication of poverty. Effective education requires effective teaching, learning and assessment strategies, which, in turn, necessitate the use of effective pedagogical and psychological approaches to meet the demands of a new generation of learners. Effective education becomes possible when learners are properly assessed and empowered via various appropriate assessment techniques.

Therefore, the main aim of this study was to investigate how instructors' assessment practices at a university in Ethiopia influence/enhance student empowerment. In order to achieve this aim, I used a convergent parallel/triangulation mixed-method research design, which allowed me to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. Instructors and students from the six colleges of Debre Markos University were the participants of the study. I employed questionnaires and interviews as a data-collection instrument. From a total of 5944 students and 450 instructors, 600 students and 210 instructors were selected, via probability sampling techniques, to complete questionnaires. Six department heads and six instructors were chosen, via non-probability sampling techniques, for the interviews. Before collecting the main data, a pilot study was conducted. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Moreover, the qualitative data were analysed according to themes and word descriptions.

The results of the study indicate significant variations between the perceptions of students and those of instructors, across different colleges, with regard to the practice of assessment. In addition, instructors' teaching experience, training backgrounds, and levels of education were found to influence their assessment practice to some extent. The qualitative data indicate that students face various problems in the assessment process. Most instructors are very much dependent upon written assessment methods. Moreover, instructors face challenges (such as large class sizes, time shortages, high workloads, poor student-achievement levels, insufficient resources, lack of awareness of different assessment methods, lack of commitment, and negative belief) in the attempts to employ different assessment

methods. Finally, the study revealed that empowering students in their study areas is simply untenable if instructors continue to utilise their current assessment practices. Therefore, this study contributes to a large body of literature that acknowledges the contribution of effective assessment in empowerment of students in a more effective and educationally responsive manner. At the end, the study presents important information to decision makers who create policies related to assessment in higher learning institutions.

Key terms: Student empowerment; assessment; instructors assessment practice; perception of assessment; problems in assessment; assessment methods, educational qualification; training background; teaching experience.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	–	Analysis of Variance
AU	–	African Union
BE	–	Business and Economics
CSA	–	Central Statistics Authority
DMU	–	Debre Markos University
EGSECE	–	Ethiopian General Secondary Education Entrance Certificate Examination
EFA	–	Education for All
EHEECE	–	Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination
ESDP	–	Education Sector Development Program
ETQAA	–	Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency
F	–	F distribution, Fisher's F ratio
FDRE	–	Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia
FDRGE	–	Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia
GDP	–	Growth Domestic Product
GER	–	Gross Enrolment Rate
GTP	–	Growth and Transformation Plan
HDP	–	Higher Diploma Program
HEIs	–	Higher Education Institutions
HERQA	–	Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency
HESC	–	Higher Education Strategic Centre
HSD	–	Tukey's honestly significant difference
I-TECH	–	International Training and Education Center for Health
JHPIEGO	–	An affiliate of Johns Hopkins University
KG	–	Kindergarten
MA/MSC	–	Masters of Art/ Masters of Science
MoE	–	Ministry of Education
MoFED	–	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
NCS	–	Natural and Computational Sciences
OAU	–	Organization of African Unity
PhD	–	Philosophical Doctorate Degree
PSLCE	–	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination

QA	–	Quality Assurance
QAA	–	Quality Assurance Agency
SQA	–	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSH	–	Social Science and Humanities
TVET	–	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	–	United Kingdom
UNESCO	–	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	–	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UTDC	–	University Teaching Development Centre

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, rationale for the research, problem statement, aims of the research, and research design and methodology, as well as an indication of the division of chapters. The context of the study is Debre Markos University in Ethiopia.

It is clear that education is key to the development and advancement of a nation. It is a leading instrument for promoting economic growth, creating social cohesion, advancing knowledge, and improving the living standards of the people. Higher education in this respect plays a crucial role.

Recently, there has been growing interest in improving the quality of education by considering assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process in higher education institutions. In recent years, research on classroom assessment has come to be seen as an essential aspect of effective teaching and learning (McMillan, Myran & Workman, 2002:203; Stiggins, 2002:759). The word “assessment” has a variety of meanings within the context of higher education. It is the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning and can facilitate improvement through a variety of avenues (Stassen, 2001:5). Significantly, Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2009:132) note that assessment is one of the most controversial issues in higher education today.

Assessment also plays a central role in determining the quality of education (Nenty, Adedoyin, Odili & Major, 2007:74). Assessment in higher education serves multiple purposes, such as providing information about student learning, student progress, teaching quality, and ensuring the accountability of programmes and institutions (Fletcher, Meyer, Anderson, Johnston & Rees, 2012:119).

As Nenty *et al.* (2007:74) explain, education is believed to have a positive impact on learners' behaviour, and the quantity and quality of this impact are determined by the assessment practices in use. The most important aspects of this impact are the amount, type and level of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills that are developed in learners.

One of the Ethiopian government millennium education goals involves a demand for the cultivation of the critical-thinking, problem-solving, and higher-order-thinking skills necessary for adaptation and contribution to the rapidly changing information age. Given the current human resource demands for development in society, some cognitive skills are more desirable than others; hence tertiary education; to supply the skills demanded by society, must lay a foundation that will ensure the development of such desirable skills among students. The assessment practices of instructors, as implemented in higher education institutions, have a vital contribution to make in this regard. Effective assessment practices see instructors using different assessment methods and checking their students' understanding of lesson content. With the use of different assessment methods, it is possible for instructors to empower the student to become more successful. For example, according to Tan (2004:651), student self-assessment is a popular practice for empowering students in the assessment process. Students are empowered if they are assessed according to proper assessment strategies, which make it easy to ascertain their understanding of the learning material.

Empowering students with different assessment practices has a major influence on their results. Students should be empowered for every activity in the teaching and learning process. In relation to this, Angela (1997:318) states that, when students are empowered, they are more motivated, work harder, and strive for better performance. Angela also mentions that student empowerment is both a means and an end (*ibid.*). As a means, it helps students to attain and enjoy quality learning. As an end, student empowerment is a desirable goal that all teachers should pursue because, when students feel that they can do something and do not feel powerless in their learning environment, quality learning begins.

Angela (1997:319) further explains the important components of student empowerment: Empowerment through involvement and empowerment through partnership. Firstly, student empowerment is possible only through active involvement in their learning. One of the best ways to empower students is to get them organised and to allow them to make their own decisions. Students know their learning needs and problems and, therefore, they are in the best position to tell the school what they need to learn and how they need to learn it.

Secondly, student empowerment is not a one-party activity. It requires genuine understanding and acceptance on the part of the school authority, including teachers and the school administration. Without partnership, student empowerment in the school setting is impossible. To this effect, empowering students is essential and the students should have confidence in the knowledge and skill they possess. This happens when they are empowered through a range of assessment methods.

Quality assessment is an essential element in the provision of quality education. This is because assessment provides a foundation for making sound evaluative judgments about students' learning progress, in particular, and about the effectiveness of the whole education system, in general. If the assessment possesses the qualities of validity, reliability, practicality, and objectivity, fairness, usefulness as well as the principles, then it can be called quality assessment (Oermann & Gaberson, 2009:29). Ellington (2000:316) presents seven golden rules to become an excellent tertiary-level teacher. One of these rules refers to the appropriate use of assessment methods. Good assessments are a key part of the learning process.

Assessment is an essential component of teaching (Russell & Airasian, 2008:2). Classroom assessment, which is one component of assessment in education, is an assessment that is implemented or conducted by instructors to check the achievement of the learning outcomes and student understanding of content covered by a certain lesson, topic, course or programme. As part of their daily classroom duties, instructors assess and make decisions about instructional success and students' understanding (Russell & Airasian, 2008:3). In simple

terms, good assessment information helps instructors to make accurate decisions regarding students' understanding.

Broadly speaking, the assessment types are classified as formative and summative (Oermann & Gaberson, 2009:10). According to Popham (2008:5), formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. Popham (2012: 1) also notes that assessment is a continuous process in which students and teachers engage to monitor learning and to inform further instruction. Formative assessment is used to identify future learning needs and gaps in learning. It can also identify an individual's support needs. The results of formative assessment are used to set learning goals and success criteria, and to provide feedback to learners (Scottish Qualifications Authority, SQA, 2009:4).

As mentioned, the other form of assessment is summative assessment. The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2002:21) states that summative assessments are used to measure what students have learnt at the end of a unit, determine student promotion, and ensure that they have met required standards on the way to earning certification for school completion or to enter certain occupations, or as a method for selecting students for entry into further education. Summative assessment of students' achievement involves judging the quality or worth of their achievement after the instructional process is completed. Giving letter grades on report cards is one example of reporting a summative evaluation of a student's achievement (Brookhart & Nitko, 2008:6).

Generally, in education, assessment has both formative and summative purposes and both goals can be achieved through a range of traditional techniques, including multiple-choice tests, essays and short- or long-answer exams, as well as by more alternative means, including portfolio assessment and peer, group and self-assessment (Bilgin & Fraser, 2007:1). Alternative assessment methods are becoming increasingly common in higher education, with the aim of increasing the potential learning of students. Among the different assessment methods, peer assessment, self-assessment and other alternative formative and summative

assessment methods have their own contribution to make toward the empowerment of students in their learning.

If the students are properly assessed with the provision of appropriate and timely feedback, they will understand the lesson that has been presented to them and achieve better results in their area of study. Therefore, the assessment method which is implemented can empower them to be creative, proficient and competent in the real world of work. This means that, when the students are empowered via different assessment methods, they feel a sense of confidence, capability, competence, and self-esteem, enabling them to meet life's challenges more effectively. But this may be affected by different factors from the side of students, instructors and institution at which the students are attending their learning.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Ethiopian Ministry of Education is committed to providing high-quality education for students at all levels of education (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 2011). The government has made substantial efforts to widen access to universities, aiming to achieve its millennium development goals. However, the progress of efforts to improve the quality of education has significantly lagged behind the initial goals set. This is largely evident in the poor achievement levels of students and may be a result of the poor-quality of assessments administered in universities (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 2011).

For government to achieve its mission, quality assessment of students' academic work must take place. Therefore, instructors' assessment practices play an essential role in addressing students' learning needs and can ultimately improve instructor accountability and the education system as a whole. Understanding teachers' assessment practices serves as a way of finding out if teachers adopt or use quality assessment methods to meet the learning needs of students (McMillan, 2001:22).

Empirical studies at international level have revealed that the assessment of students' learning is not well-understood. Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall (2003:42) note that, in most disciplines, this is an under-researched aspect of higher education. In the Ethiopian context, although the government introduced an education and training policy in 1994, the issue of how learning assessment can be measured has not been touched on in the reform process (Shenkute, 1998:5). Shenkute's study of the issue has revealed that current knowledge of testing is superficial and theoretical and that basic principles of testing are not well understood by most teachers.

My own personal observation has also been that, in many of our universities and colleges, students complain about the quality of instructors' testing practices, the different assessment techniques used, and the approach taken to scoring and grading. This complaint arises partly because some tests set by instructors are poorly constructed, resulting in their failure to determine students' achievement accurately and precisely. That is, the wording and other elements of tests and exams are often ambiguous or unclear to students. This ambiguity may arise from instructors' inability to set proper questions in terms of language, difficulty level, the provision of appropriate clues, and other issues.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

In developing countries like Ethiopia, education is considered to be a mode of development and a valuable instrument in the eradication of poverty. The chief goal of the Ethiopian government's education and training policy is the cultivation of citizens with an all-round education, who are capable of playing conscious and active roles in the economic, social, and political life of the country at various levels (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 2002:15).

The needs of society should be reflected in the educational objectives of a particular country. In line with this, the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy of 1994 formulated the following general objectives (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 1994:7-8):

- Develop the physical and mental potential and the problem-solving capacity of individuals by expanding education, in particular, and by providing basic education for all.
- Bring up citizens who can take care of and utilise resources wisely, who are trained in various skills by raising the private and social benefits of education.
- Bring up citizens who respect human rights, stand for the well-being of people, as well as for equality, justice and peace, endowed with a democratic culture and discipline.
- Educate citizens to differentiate harmful practices from useful ones, to seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show positive attitudes towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society.
- Cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environmental and societal needs.

The realisation of the above listed-educational objectives of the country requires effective teaching, learning and assessment strategies, which, in turn, necessitates the use of effective pedagogical and psychological approaches to meet the demands of the new generation. Specifically, these objectives are achieved when learners are properly assessed and empowered via various assessment methods in relation to the domains being measured. The traditional assessment methods (like multiple-choice, true-false, matching, short-answer items, etc.) may not be suitable to assess students' overall understanding of a subject. Therefore, it is better if the instructors use alternative assessment methods (project works, assignments, peer and self-assessment etc.) to evaluate their students' understanding of a subject in higher education institutions.

Assessment is a central element of the overall quality of teaching and learning in higher education (James, McInnis & Devlin, 2002:1). In order to assess students' academic work effectively and efficiently, instructors should know and understand the principles of assessment. Assessment principles are essential tools for

teachers as they design, implement and evaluate their assessment practices (Nicol, 2007:2). Nicol also notes that these principles provide a robust and comprehensive frame of reference for assessment in higher education (*ibid.*). The reason for defining assessment principles is that they help to guide and inform practice. Hence, all instructors are required to have assessment skills. However, numerous studies show that most teachers lack these skills (McMillan, 2001: 21; Adedoyin, 2012:15).

Shenkute (1998:4) explains that good assessment can help both the teacher and students to focus on the important aspects of teaching and learning. In fact, the importance of instructors' assessment and testing practice is even greater than that attributed to it by Shenkute. The information regarding the effectiveness of the entire education system is derived from assessment and testing practices. Hence, the results of a study such as this one can help educational stakeholders to evaluate how to make learning more effective in higher education. Specifically stated, university instructors and students are among the groups who stand to benefit most from this because the results of the study will show instructors what is going right/wrong in their assessment practice, which may enable them to improve their practice accordingly. After the student and instructors, the administrative bodies in universities and the education sector in general stand to benefit significantly from this study, in that they may gain the insight necessary to organise appropriate training for instructors in need of it.

In general, the findings of this study will add to the existing body of knowledge regarding assessment theory and practice within the Ethiopian education system and act as a framework for preparing and professionally developing instructors' in the use of assessments in higher education institutions. Most importantly, little research has been carried out regarding the issue of instructors' assessment practices in relation to the enhancement of student empowerment in Ethiopian higher education institutions. Thus, the significance of the study is multifaceted and, for these reasons, I am motivated to conduct research in this area.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Assessment is an integral and prominent part of teaching and learning processes at different levels (primary, secondary and tertiary). It has particularly a decisive role in higher education institutions (HEIs), where highly trained manpower is produced. However, the current trends in Ethiopia show that assessment is not handled properly or in accordance with actual requirements to empower students learning and measure their real achievement.

Different higher education institutions, and even different faculties or departments within the same HEI, show a great deal of variation in handling assessment issues. Furthermore, existing research shows that there are many problems associated with teachers' assessment practices. But the assessment practice of instructors in relation to the empowerment of students learning in Ethiopian higher institutions in particular and in the world in general is not studied very well. In relation to the problems associated with teachers' assessment practices absence of an adequate knowledge base regarding basic testing and measurement concepts (Stiggins, 2004:23), limited teacher training in assessment, and teachers' failure to employ and adhere to the measurement guidelines taught to them in measurement courses (Campbell & Evans, 2000:354) are identified. But, the existences of these problems in higher institutions are not studied.

The main goal of the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy which is formulated by Ministry of Education in 1994 was to producing graduates who are creative, proficient, competent and an entrepreneur. In the teaching learning process, empowering students with different assessment methods have a positive impact on their result. According to Angela (1997:318), when students are empowered, they are more motivated, work harder, and strive for better performance. But, there are gaps in empowering students to be creative, proficient and competent through the assessment practices implemented in the universities. For example, in the Ethiopian context, as Mikre (2010:103) stated, a significant proportion of students (particularly those in higher institutes) perceive assessment as a basic source of power for instructors and of stress and disempowerment for themselves.

As discussed by Haladyna & Downing (2004, in Mikre, 2010:103), when students move from one term into the next, they become increasingly dissatisfied with, cynical about and suspicious of assessment practices, viewing them as an unfair means to distribute rewards and punishment. In relation to this, Mikre (2010:103) notes that the current practice of assessment in higher learning institutes is that, in most cases, instructors are mandated to influence assessment choices and practices. Mikre (*ibid.*) also notes that, since results of assessment decisively affect the academic competence and occupational futures of students, instructors are required to create productive learning environments, which makes assessment integral to the instructional process. According to Francis (2008:547), providing empowerment to students with regard to assessment procedures is a potential mechanism for increasing students' satisfaction with their education programme and environment.

All instructors must have assessment skills in order to successfully implement assessments. Instructors use various techniques in assessment, even though they may not have received appropriate training on certain aspects of classroom assessment (Marso & Pigge, in Tadesse, 2009:26). As such, studies show that most teachers lack effective assessment knowledge and skills in their evaluation of academic achievement to empower their students (McMillan, 2001:21; Adedoyin, 2012:15). Currently, not much is known about Ethiopian instructors' assessment practices and assessment skills. This study is carried out in an effort to identify instructors' assessment practice to enable appropriate actions be taken to enhance instructors' assessment skills in empowering students in their learning.

The relationship between assessment practices and the overall quality of teaching and learning is often underestimated; yet, assessment requirements and the clarity of assessment criteria and standards significantly influence the effectiveness of student learning. Carefully designed assessments contribute directly to the way in which students approach their studies and, therefore, contribute indirectly, but powerfully, to the quality of their learning (James *et al.*, 2002:1).

Although the assessment practices of newly established universities is seldom researched, the poor quality of assessments may potentially be attributed to

limitations with regard to instructors' knowledge of the principles of assessment, training background, teaching experience and level of education. Specifically stated, in newly established universities nowadays, most of the instructors are new to the teaching profession. Furthermore, they do not have adequate knowledge of test construction principles because most of them have not taken pedagogy courses during their graduate and undergraduate studies. Moreover, even experienced instructors do not have the requisite knowledge of item analysis and using item banks.

In the light of the forgoing discussion, this research project attempts to understand university instructors' assessment strategies in order to determine whether these assessment strategies empower students by developing their knowledge, skills and abilities. Therefore, the main research question is:

How do instructors' empower students with their assessment practices at a university in Ethiopia?

To appropriately answer the main research question, answers to the following sub-questions need to be found:

- According to existing scientific literature, what does assessment at a tertiary level comprise?
- What are the perceptions of students about their instructors' assessment practices?
- What are the perceptions of instructors about their own assessment practices?
- Does an instructor's teaching experience, training background, and level of education influence his/her practice of assessment?
- Which assessment methods are predominantly used by instructors?
- What problems regarding assessment do instructors and students experience?
- How can student empowerment be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices?

1.5 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The main aim of this research is to investigate how instructors' assessment practices at a university in Ethiopia influence/enhance student empowerment.

The research specifically aims to:

- review the existing scientific literature regarding assessment at tertiary level;
- determine the perceptions of students about their instructors' assessment practices;
- determine the views (perceptions) of instructors about their own assessment practices;
- investigate the influence of instructors' teaching experience, training backgrounds, and levels of education on their practice of assessment;
- identify the assessment methods predominantly used by instructors;
- explore the problems experienced by instructors and students regarding assessment; and
- determine how student empowerment can be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices

1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Many concepts are related to instructors' assessment practices. For the purpose of this research, due to the complexity and various meanings attached to such concepts, the key concepts used in this research study are clarified as follows:

1.6.1 Tertiary Education

The Analytic Quality Glossary (Harvey, 2004-12) defines tertiary education as formal, non-compulsory education that follows secondary education. As it is defined in the *Collins English Dictionary* online (2015), tertiary education is formal education following secondary education and takes place at a college or university.

In this study, the term “tertiary education” refers to higher education – in particular, undergraduate and graduate programmes of study – which comes after the completion of elementary and high school. Thus, the term relates to the education received at colleges and universities.

1.6.2 Assessment

Assessment is a broad term that includes all of the various methods used to determine the extent of an individual’s achievement (Aranda & Yates, 2009:2). It is also defined as the systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programmes undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. It is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. According to Leach, Neutze and Zepke (2001:293), assessment is the process that determines whether or not learners have succeeded.

Stassen (2001:5) also defines assessment as the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning. It is a general term that encompasses all methods used to judge the performance of an individual or a group. It is the ongoing process of gathering a variety of student assessment evidence to make decisions for the improvement of student learning. In this research study, assessment is defined as the processes and methods used by instructors to assess students’ performance.

1.6.3 Assessment methods

Assessment methods refer to the various strategies and techniques that instructors might use to acquire assessment information. Assessment methods are tools or instruments use by instructors to measure students’ academic work. According to Linn and Miller (2005:26), assessment methods refer to any of a variety of procedures used to obtain information about student performance. McAlister (2011:7) also states that assessment methods specify the assessment instruments which are used. Assessment methods should be appropriate for and compatible with the purpose and context of the assessment.

1.6.4 Assessment practices

Assessment practices are the assessment activities that instructors apply in their evaluation of students' performance. An assessment practice is a manner of conducting assessment using one of a number of possible methods. It covers a wide range of issues, including instructors' beliefs regarding and the value they attach to the assessment of students, their perceptions about training, their test planning and construction, and grading, as well as their use of assessment results.

1.6.5 Student empowerment

Harvey (2004:12) defines empowerment as the development of knowledge, skills and abilities in learners to enable them to control and develop their learning. Leach *et al.* (2001:294), explain that empowerment, in this assessment context, encourages learners to take direct action, both as individuals and in groups, to assess their own work, critique their assessment regime and that of the academic world in general, and negotiate practices different from those that are proposed. Al-Shalabi (2011: 61), mean while, view empowerment as "equipping and raising the confidence of individuals so they can become more successful learners". Empowerment can best be defined as the act of providing a student with a sense of confidence, capability, competence, and self-esteem to meet life's challenges more effectively. According to Leach *et al.* (2001:293), learner empowerment is a keystone of assessment practices.

1.6.6 Instructors

Instructors are university teachers with various qualifications (i.e. bachelor, master's degrees and doctorates).

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four of this study report. The discussion below outlines the research design and methodology. Specifically, the nature of the research approach and setting are discussed.

1.7.1 Mixed-method research approach

The purpose of this study is to investigate the ways in which instructors' assessment practices at an Ethiopian university influence or enhance student empowerment. To achieve the desired objectives, the study followed a mixed-method research approach. With mixed-method research, the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study or programme of inquiry (Creemers, Kyriakides & Sammons, 2010:116; De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2005:360).

1.7.2 Empirical investigation

The empirical investigation in this research study is based on observation or experience rather than only on theory or abstract logic. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2002:268) explain that an empirical research design constitutes all the decisions a researcher makes in planning the research. As mentioned, in this research study, a mixed-method research approach is used.

1.7.2.1 Setting

The setting selected for the research is Debre Markos University (DMU). My motivations for selecting this university are threefold:

- The problem in question is particularly serious at DMU
- DMU can be seen as representative of Ethiopian public universities in general.

- DMU is my work place, which made it easier for me to gather data and enabled me to enjoy support and cooperation from my colleagues during data collection, helping me to obtain valid and reliable data.

1.7.2.2 Participants

Instructors and students of the selected university are the population of this study. All instructors who are on duty and second and third year students are the target population and participants of the study. Specifically stated, instructors and second and third-year students from six colleges of the university are considered as participants for the study. I considered 210 instructors and 600 students as samples for the study.

1.8 Demarcation of the research

As noted, the focus of this research was on investigating the practices, perceptions and experiences of instructors' assessment practices and the problems that they face in enhancing student empowerment at Debre Markos University, Ethiopia.

DMU is a public university located in the town of Debre Markos, Ethiopia. The university is located two kilometres from central town square and 300km from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. It has a latitude and longitude of 10°20'N 37°43'E/ 10.333°N 37.717°E and an elevation of 2446 metres.

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION

The dissertation is organised as follows:

- Chapter One covers the introduction, background of the study, rationale for the research, problem statement, research aims, definition of key concepts, and research design and methodology, as well as the demarcation of the study and chapter division.
- Chapter Two includes a literature study and theoretical background.

- Chapter Three provides a more detailed literature study on the issue within the Ethiopian context.
- Chapter Four describes the research design selected for the empirical investigation. A detailed explanation of the methodology and procedures selected for the empirical investigation is given.
- Chapter Five contains an analysis and presentation of the data.
- Chapter Six presents an overview of the research results, supported by previous studies.
- Finally, in Chapter Seven, I summarise findings, draw conclusions, and make recommendations on the basis of analysed and interpreted data.

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a brief introduction to the research project undertaken. The rationale, problem statement, aims of the research, definition of key concepts, research methods, and chapter division has been covered. The next chapter deals with the literature study on the enhancement of student empowerment through lecturers' assessment practices.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES, PURPOSES, ASSESSMENT METHODS AND PROBLEMS REGARDING ASSESSMENT IN TERTIARY EDUCATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The intention of this chapter is to present a review of the existing literature surrounding instructors' assessment practices in the teaching and learning process and how they enhance the empowerment of students. This chapter also covers the following:

- Meanings, purposes and methods of assessment in tertiary education;
- Matters to take into consideration with regard to quality assessment practices;
- Instructors' perceptions about their own assessment practices;
- Students' perceptions about their instructors' assessment practices;
- The influence of instructors' demographic variables on their assessment practices;
- The problems experienced by instructors and students regarding tertiary assessment;
- Possible strategies for empowering students through instructors' assessment practices.

2.2 MEANING OF ASSESSMENT IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Assessment is a core element in the overall educational process of teaching and learning in higher education. In fact, Brink and Lautenbach (2011:503) state that assessment is one of the cornerstones of education. The word "assessment" has taken on a variety of meanings within higher education (Gonzales & Fuggan, 2012: 45). Assessment in tertiary education is an ongoing evaluation process aimed at understanding and improving student learning by measuring the achievement of

learning outcomes including knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs. As it is defined by Martha, Kathryn and Mya (2001:5), assessment is the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning. It is a potent strategic tool with which educators can explain learning outcomes – which students will be rewarded for achieving – and guide students to develop effective approaches to study (Taylor, 2008:20). According to Huba and Freed (2008, in Du Plessis, Marais & Van Schalkwyk, 2011:24), assessment is the process of gathering information from multiple and diverse sources and discussing it in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences.

Assessment is a central element in the overall quality of teaching and learning in higher education (Pittaway, Hannon, Gibb, & Thompson, 2009:72). That is, assessment cannot be viewed in isolation from other aspects of teaching and learning. According to UNESCO and UNICEF (2012:41), improving assessment systems is critical for improving the quality of education. Well-designed assessment sets clear expectations, establishes a reasonable workload and provides opportunities for students to self-monitor, rehearse, practice and receive feedback.

2.3 THEORIES RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Before theories related to educational assessment can be explained, it is important that the concepts “learning” and “theory” are properly understood. According to Schunk (2012:4), learning is an enduring change in behaviour or the capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or other experience. Pritchard (2009:2) explains that to learn is to gain knowledge of or skills in something through study, teaching, instruction or experience.

According to Schunk (2012:4), a theory is a scientifically acceptable set of principles offered to explain a phenomenon. Theories are analytical tools for understanding, explaining and making predictions about a given subject matter. Anderson and Elloumi (2004:4) mention that theories are reasoned explanations rather than absolute facts that deal with a particular phenomenon.

Wiersma and Jurs (2009:5) also remark that a theory is a generalisation or series of generalisations by which theorists attempt to explain some phenomenon in a systematic manner. Learning theories attempt to explain how students think and what factors determine their behaviour and learning. Learning theories are the basic raw materials applied in the teaching and learning process. It is, therefore, essential for the instructor to understand learning theories in order to design effective teaching and assessment activities.

Historically, the theories of assessment have not been as well developed as other forms of educational theories. As a result, it is more commonplace to speak of assessment principles than assessment theories (Miller, 2006:7). According to Erwin (1991:15), assessment theory is the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. More specifically, assessment is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analysing, interpreting, and using information to increase students' learning and development.

Assessment plays a central role in efforts to bring about improvements in the educational system (Davis, Kumtepe & Aydenize, 2007:113). The assessments instructors use should change the behaviour (performance) of their learners. As Yorke (2003:484) explains, theory provides a framework for the construction of assessments of various kinds. A theory provides a general explanation for observations made overtime and it also explains and predicts behaviour. York also notes that untheorized assessment increases the risk of partiality; as will shortly be argued in the case of formative assessment, theorisation is needed if some important aspects of assessment are not to be marginalised (*ibid.*).

There is a wide variety of theories regarding methods of assessment. Different theories of learning such as behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism have been used to improve learning, assessment and performance in the instructional process. Each of these theories has unique features based on distinct perspectives on the learning process. The theories of educational assessment go along with the various learning theories. According to Schunk (2000:30), one learning theory only is not enough to explain all the learning types and the problems related to learning. Theorists of most learning theories – such as

behaviourist, constructivist and cognitive theories – have made important suggestions for improving and organising teaching and assessment.

As Kapambwe (2009:2) explains, different philosophical and psychological theories of learning determine the use of different assessment procedures, depending on the purposes for which teaching and learning are intended.

2.3.1 Philosophical foundation of learning and assessment

All teaching, learning and assessment strategies have philosophical bases. According to Kapambwe (*ibid.*), the philosophical theories of learning determine the use of different assessment methods. The following table provides a detailed explanation of the integration of multiple educational philosophies to determine curriculum organisation, and teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

Table 2.1 The Integration of Multiple Educational Philosophies for Curriculum Organisation, and Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies

Educational Philosophy	Curriculum Organisation and Emphasis	Teaching and Learning Strategies	Assessment Strategies
Traditional (Perennialism and Essentialism) Philosophical Base: Realism and Idealism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and information in terms of subject content • Compartmentalised subject matter • Excellence and high standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-centred • Textbooks and workbooks • Whole class learning • Pupils' passive involvement • Uniform class experience and instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal and standardised procedures to monitor pupils' progress in terms of passing courses • Assessment of pupils' mastery of concepts
Contemporary (Progressivism and Reconstruction) Philosophical Base: Pragmatism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated subject matter • Resolution of problems • Functioning in social environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied instructional materials • Learning through problem solving • Teacher as advisor • A variety of teaching methods • Learner-centred as learners are actively involved in seeking information to be used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal assessment procedures • Participatory as learners are engaged in discovering what they know and can do

2.3.2 Psychological theories of learning and assessment

Kapambwe (2009:3) explains that the three major theories of learning influence the type of assessment used based on the way they view learning. In this regard, the following table relates the three psychological theories of learning with the assessment procedure they advocate for use in the teaching and learning process.

Table 2.2 Psychological Theories of Learning and Assessment Procedure

Psychological Theory on Learning	Conceptualisation of Learning	Assessment Procedure
Behaviourist (Association)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habit formation and as connecting more habits into a complex structure • Subject mastery • Learning involves recombining discrete parts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of pupils' acquisition of discrete skills and knowledge in a given domain • Large-scale assessment
Cognitive (Rationalist)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured processing of information that enables learners to understand concepts and acquire abilities • Abilities to transfer what is learned to other tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions that assesses students' understanding of general concepts • Assesses the use of strategies to solve problems and make inferences
Constructivist (Situative and Sociohistorical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory activity in socially organised practices like formulating and evaluating questions and inferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasises students' participation in authentic inquiry activities and success on tasks in non-academic settings

In general, behaviourist, cognitivist, and constructivist theories have contributed in different ways to the design of different teaching and assessment methods. Behaviourist strategies can be used to teach the facts (what); cognitivist strategies, the principles and processes (how); and constructivist strategies to teach the real-life and personal applications and contextual learning. There is a shift toward constructive learning, in which learners are given the opportunity to construct their own meaning (Anderson, 2008:39; 50).

2.3.3 Assessment according to behaviourism learning theory

Behaviourism is a philosophy of learning that only focuses on objectively observable behaviours and discounts mental activities. The teaching and learning process in a traditional behaviourism approach focuses on covering extensive subject areas, which causes the students to have little time to engage in thinking beyond the facts and problem solving, and consequently minimising independent and autonomous learning (Holt & Willard-Holt, 2000:244).

According to Fautley and Savage (2008:18), assessment viewed from a behaviourist perspective involves making judgements about observable behaviours, and ascertaining whether or not the student can evidence the required behaviour. Green (2002:1) also describes behaviourism as it offers a particular perspective on how learning occurs and how teaching impacts that process. Learning is a persisting change in performance or performance potential that results from experience and interaction with the world (Driscoll, 2000:3). These two ideas—the importance of measurable and observable performance and the impact of the environment, comprise foundational principles of the behaviourist approach to learning. The basic argument is that only observable, measurable behaviour is the appropriate object for psychological study. Initially, the theory contended that certain behavioural responses come to be associated with specific environmental stimuli.

It is verified that, behaviourism concepts can be applied to course design as well, and will be illustrated in a couple of examples. First, weighting different assessment methods that is, assignments, projects and tests to correspond with the proportional amount of effort you want students to put into these activities rewards and reinforces student effort and performance in those areas. Similarly, providing feedback during the development of projects, essays or research projects rewards and reinforces learning over time and should result in better retention and skill development (Green, 2002:1).

Green (*ibid.*) points out aspects to remember when incorporating behaviourist principles into the teaching and learning process:

- Write observable and measurable behavioural learning outcomes.
- Specify the desired performances in advance and verify learning with appropriate assessments.
- Emphasise performance, and practice in an authentic context.
- Use instructional strategies to shape desired skills.
- Reinforce accomplishments with appropriate feedback.

In general, the principles of behaviourism can be useful in facilitating learning within the classroom. Instructors concentrate on measuring overt behaviour, particularly whether students are able to reach the terminal course objectives. Students' attitudes and commitment to programme objectives receive little attention. Hence, assessment methods in behaviourist approaches comprise of closed-ended questions such as true-false, matching and multiple-choice questions (Winter, Lemons, Bookman & Hoese, 2001:328-329).

2.3.4 Assessment according to cognitivist learning theory

Hassan (2011:335) states that cognitivism, as a philosophical and educational school, focuses on studying the cognitive abilities and mental processes of the individual. According to this theory learning is a cognitive process of acquiring skills or knowledge. It is a dynamic process that influences and is influenced by the learning environment. Assessment of students' performance is an integral part of learning since it paves the way for further learning (*ibid*: 327).

According to Anderson (2008:21) cognitivists see learning as an internal process that involves memory, thinking, reflection, abstraction, motivation, and meta cognition. In another way, the same author states that cognitive psychology looks at learning from an information processing point of view, where the learner uses different types of memory during learning.

The cognitive revolution reintroduced the concept of mind. In contrast to past, mechanistic theories of knowledge acquisition, we now understand that learning is an active process of mental construction and sense making. From cognitive theory it can be learned that existing knowledge structures and beliefs work to enable or

impede new learning, that intelligent thought involves self-monitoring and awareness about when and how to use skills, and that "expertise" develops in a field of study as a principled and coherent way of thinking and representing problems, not just as an accumulation of information (Shepard, 2000:6).

If we wish to make our theories of assessment compatible with our theories of learning, Shepard (2000:7) asserts that we need to:

- change the form and content of assessments; and
- change the way we use and regard assessment in classrooms.

Some of the potential changes in form are already familiar to most teachers, such as a greater use of open-ended performance tasks and setting assessment tasks in real-world contexts. Furthermore, Shepard (2000:8) suggests that classroom routines and related assessments should reflect the need to socialise students "into the discourse and practices of academic disciplines" as well as foster meta cognition and important dispositions.

Instructors in higher education should assess, rate and evaluate students' learning in accordance with their cognitive development if they are to build on their cognitive structures. According to Hassan (2011:336), in the context of engineering education, experiments and demonstrations will be important to nurture the students' creativity and the environment around them.

In general, the teaching and learning of new skills must follow a well-structured pattern to account for the students' cognitive abilities. A learning method that applies Piaget's theory may well be linked with a taxonomic assessment in which taxonomies are used to help the teacher to read the qualitative leap in students' learning and cognitive development.

As a classification system of educational objectives, taxonomy is designed to operate in a certain controlled context; for instance, the teacher can integrate everything from planning to evaluation of teaching. Taxonomy, thus, contains levels that are uniform but not exactly the same as Piaget's developmental stages.

These levels take into account the structural complexity of students' solutions to various assessment tasks (*ibid.*).

The role of the university instructor, in general, is to guide the student to reach an appropriate cognitive level that corresponds to the expected (or published) study outcomes. As mentioned earlier, the instructor should build upon a cognitive structure that has already been built in the cognitive structure of the students from previous courses or certain knowledge levels, as stated in the course syllabus requirements. The aim of the learning process should correspond to what the instructor aspires to achieve in learning (e.g. analysis, evaluation or just collecting facts) in accordance with the course syllabus (*ibid.* :337). To analyse course objectives and assessment criteria, the taxonomy uses a two-dimensional matrix consisting of six categories (steps) and four forms of knowledge (vertical). The forms of knowledge are factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge and meta-cognitive knowledge.

According to Hassan (*ibid.*), the assessment criteria are defined as the criteria against which students' performance on the course will be judged, made available in writing to students in the course description. The aim is to provide students with a clear and explicit understanding of the standards they are expected to achieve in relation to the marks awarded. The assessment criteria provide a common reference point on which academic judgement can be based, thus promoting consistency in marking. Instructors connect their taxonomy to these criteria and translate each category above to the corresponding grade.

The cognitive view of assessment emphasises questions about whether students understand general principles in a domain and whether they use methods and strategies that are useful in solving problems in the domain (Dysthe, 2004:7). Instructors need to assess the student's abilities to discover whether he or she is ready to learn.

2.3.5 Assessment according to constructivist learning theory

Constructivism has become one of the most prominent learning theories. The reason for its popularity is that the learner is placed in the centre of the learning process. According to Jean Piaget, the main assumption of this theory is that a person constructs “personal meaning” since the moment of birth. It means that every person creates their own sense of the world based on their experiences and this is the reason why the learner occupies the central place in constructivism (Williams & Burden, 1997:51).

Constructivists see learners as active rather than passive. Knowledge is not received from the outside or from someone else; rather, the individual learner interprets and processes what is received through the senses to create knowledge. The learner is the centre of the learning, with the instructor playing an advising and facilitating role. Learners should be allowed to construct knowledge rather than being given knowledge through instruction (Anderson, 2008:30).

Constructivism believes that knowledge is generated by the learners through experienced-based activities rather than directed by instructors (Roblyer, 2006: 38). Constructivist theories also believe strongly in the following (*ibid.*):

- a. Knowledge is not transmitted but constructed through hand-on activities or personal experience which generates knowledge.
- b. Learning occurs through student-centred activities rather than instructor-led.
- c. Students must be allowed to exhibit what they have learned in different ways, not just in testing or examination.

The detail description of this theory in relation to the empowerment of students through assessment is presented in the next section.

2.4 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ASSESSMENT

In the previous section, the different theories of learning in relation to educational assessment are presented. From the three theories, the constructivist theory is more close and applicable to the present study even if the other theories (i.e. behaviourist and cognitive) have their own contribution for the issue raised. Therefore, the theoretical framework of student empowerment through assessment is treated on the bases of the constructivist theory. According to Harvey (2004:12), empowerment is the development of knowledge, skills and abilities in the learner to enable them to control and develop their learning. In this regard, empowering students with different assessment methods (i.e. alternative assessments) plays a great role in their result.

In constructivist learning environments assessment is not a separate examination at the end of the course; rather, assessment methods are integrated into the learning process itself. Traditional examinations often lead students to adopt a surface approach to learning and studying, and to attempt to memorise the material instead of trying to understand it (Boudourides, 2003:158). Furthermore, traditional examinations are not able to capture the actual changes in students' knowledge. In contrast, assessment methods that emphasise the learning process itself and encourage students to engage in meta cognitive and reflective activities are in harmony with a constructivist view of learning. Authentic assessment or performance assessment represents this type of alternative assessment methodology.

Holt and Willard-Holt (2000:243) note that constructivists view assessment as a process that involves both the lecturer and the student. Educators who prefer to use constructivist methods and principles in evaluating student work have several different avenues to choose from that can help enhance the learning experience of students. According to Holt and Willard-Holt (2000:244), one principle of assessment in a constructivist classroom is not to isolate evaluation as a single exercise. Constructivists often see learning as a cyclical process. Since the shape

of a circle has no beginning and no end, then the mark of where to assess could become unclear. Constructivists do not see assessment as an ending activity, but rather an ongoing process that helps the student continue to learn.

When constructivists assess students, they prefer to use methods that either allow them to engage in dialogue with the learner, or give them opportunities to observe a student as he or she develops knowledge (Holt & Willard-Holt, 2000:244).

Most learning theories recognise the importance of assessment and feedback. Indeed, according to constructivists, learning results from our reflections on feedback from environmental interactions. What is perhaps different about constructivist approaches to assessment are their emphases on the importance of the individual's processing of environmental feedback (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000:140-141) that provide ongoing meaningful feedback to students.

Constructivism suggests that self-assessment is integral to learning, and so implies that opportunities for self-assessment should occur continuously and be embedded within learning activities. Constructivist theory also implies that it is especially important to encourage students to continuously construct and reconstruct their knowledge, to evolve and change their understanding, in response to feedback. Thus, constructivist approaches contend that good assessment practices are those that value revision and the processes of knowledge construction. Because constructivism views knowledge as complex mental structures, constructivist approaches further contend that good assessment practices emphasise learning with understanding and the application of knowledge, and not the memorisation of isolated facts and procedures. Learning and assessment methods comprise of open-ended questions and scenarios, creating portfolios and descriptive narratives (Roblyer, 2006:53-54).

Social constructivist theorists make the following assumptions about assessment. They argue that assessment should be collaborative, continual, and less formal and embedded in real-world tasks (Bell & Cowie, 2001:19; Shepard, 2000:8). According to Rust, Price and O'Donovan (2007:145), social-constructivist process model argues that students should be actively engaged with every stage of the

assessment process in order that they truly understand the requirements of the process, and the criteria and standards being applied, and should subsequently produce better work. Social constructivism also views assessment as a formative process that encourages students to learn continuously (Davis *et al.*, 2007:115; Shepard, 2000:8).

Proponents argue that the fundamental strength of a social constructivist assessment format lies in its ability to individualise assessment, to engage teachers more deeply in the assessment process and to provide more rigorous and meaningful feedback. Such assessment practices involve students in reflective activities in which teachers encourage students to consider the strengths and weaknesses of their learning and make plans for subsequent actions (Shepard, 2000:9).

According to Elton and Johnston (2002:65), learning, teaching and assessment are closely bound together. Learning takes place through interaction, existing in the transaction between student and student, student and text, student and teacher. Viewed from a constructivist perspective, then, assessment procedures are inevitably a part of the dialectic of teaching and learning, part of the process which defines what knowledge is, what is learned, and how students learn. Assessments that reflect this perspective provide a means for engaging students in self-reflection and for acknowledging their role as collaborators in the learning process.

2.5 PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the ongoing process of gathering, analysing and reflecting on evidence to make informed and consistent judgements to improve future student learning. Effective assessment provides detailed, useful information for instructors, learners and other stakeholders. Assessment works best when its purpose is clear, and when it is carefully designed to fit that purpose. Assessment has multiple purposes. According to the Assessment and Reporting Unit Learning Policies Branch Office of Learning and Teaching (2005:8), the three main purposes for assessment are described as follows:

- Assessment for learning (formative);
- Assessment as learning (formative);
- Assessment of learning (summative).

Assessment for, as and of learning are all important in student learning. Assessment for learning and assessment as learning are both referred to as formative assessment. Assessment of learning is referred to as summative assessment.

Assessment for and as learning occur while students are engaged in the process of learning, while assessment of learning occurs at the end of a learning process or task or unit of work or for reporting at the end of a time period such as a semester. The three main purposes of assessment are complementary of each other and all three together are very powerful in improving student learning.

2.5.1 Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning is also referred to as formative assessment (Moss & Brookhart, 2009:7). Heritage, Kim, Vendlinski and Herman (2009:24) define formative assessment as “a systematic process to continuously gather evidence and provide feedback about learning while instruction is under way”. As they verified on the same page, feedback identifies the gap between a student’s current level of learning and a desired learning goal.

Popham (2008:5) explains that formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement of intended instructional outcomes. Popham (2008:6) adds a critical clarification that formative assessment is always a planned process; it does not happen accidentally. Other definitions extend the concept of formative assessment as a process by incorporating assessment tools when they can be seamlessly integrated into classroom activities for the explicit purpose of gathering feedback to inform instruction or learning (Heritage, 2007:142). Taken together, formative assessment is a process in which

teachers use various tools and strategies to determine what students know, identify gaps in understanding, and plan future instruction to improve learning.

Formative assessment is conducted throughout the programme with continuous feedback during the course or programme. It is intended to improve the teaching and learning process through constant feedback during the learning process. Formative assessment involves the use of continuous assessment. Continuous assessments entail the use of tests, assignments, projects, seminars, tutorials, and observation techniques (Opolot-Okurut, 2006:4).

According to the Assessment and Reporting Unit Learning Policies Branch Office of Learning and Teaching (2005:8) assessment for learning integrates assessment into the learning and teaching process and establishes the teacher's role in assessment. Through assessment for learning teachers ascertain students' knowledge, perceptions and misconceptions and use this evidence to inform curriculum planning and teaching practice in order to support students to operate at the edge of their competence (Ibid). Assessment for learning encourages the active involvement of students in their learning and it depends on teachers' diagnostic skills to make it work (Earl, 2003:25).

Nicol and Macfarlane (2006:199) note that formative assessment and feedback should be used to empower students as self-regulated learners. The formative assessment process can be divided into four essential elements: (1) identifying the learning gap, (2) feedback, (3) student involvement, and (4) learning progression (Heritage, 2007:2).

Identifying the gap involves understanding the difference between what students know and what they need to know, and where instruction will be most effective to meet desired learning goals. Once a teacher identifies the "just right gap," he or she can then provide the necessary instructional support to help student progress toward the learning goal and engage in appropriate cognitive growth activities (*ibid.*).

Feedback: It provides critical information that the teacher needs to pinpoint the current status of a student's learning and informs next steps in the learning process. Feedback is then provided to the student in the form of clear and descriptive information so that it can be used to improve learning (Heritage, 2007: 3). Feedback not designed and intended to close the instructional gap does not meet the formative assessment definition of feedback.

Student involvement: Improving learning through formative assessment also depends on the active involvement of students in their own assessment (*ibid.*). This happens best by collaboration between the lecturer and fellow students to develop a shared knowledge about their current learning status and what they need to do to progress in their learning.

Learning progressions: If formative assessment is to provide guidance to teachers and students, it must be linked to a learning progression (*ibid.*). The learning progression should clearly articulate the sub goals that constitute progress toward the ultimate goal. It breaks down a larger learning goal into smaller sub goals. It is necessary for helping teachers locate students' current learning status in relation to a continuous set of skills needed to master the learning standard. Once a teacher has identified student locations on the learning progression continuum, he or she can work with the students to set short-term learning goals and clarify the criteria that students must meet for success. In general, assessment *for* learning:

- establishes a classroom culture that encourages interaction and the use of assessment tools;
- occurs throughout a learning sequence and is planned when instructors design teaching and learning activities;
- involves instructors sharing learning intentions and explicit assessment criteria with students;
- involves instructors and students setting and monitoring student progress against learning goals;

- requires instructors to ascertain students' prior knowledge, perceptions and misconceptions;
- involves instructors focusing on how students learn and how to scaffold their learning
- involves instructors adapting teaching practice to meet student needs;
- provides sensitive and constructive feedback to students on their performance; and
- involves instructors making formative use of summative assessment.

2.5.2 Assessment as learning

Assessment as learning (formative assessment) establishes students' roles and responsibilities in relation to their learning and assessment. It engages students in peer and self-assessment and promotes students' confidence and self-esteem through an understanding of how they learn. Its focus on student reflection on their learning is powerful in building meta-cognition and an ability to plan for their own future learning goals. According to Hassan (2011:333), formative assessment aims to help students develop self-awareness, self-control and strengthen their learning in relation to the expected study outcomes of the course syllabus or curriculum.

In assessment as learning students monitor their learning and use feedback from this monitoring to make adaptations and adjustments to what they understand (Earl, 2003:24). Earl also expresses the view that:

Effective assessment empowers students to ask reflective questions and consider a range of strategies for learning and acting. Over time, students move forward in their learning when they can use personal knowledge to construct meaning, have skills of self-monitoring to realize that they don't understand something, and have ways of deciding what to do next (ibid.)

Many effective methods of formative assessment require teachers' resources, time, and knowledge of effective assessment practices (Popham, 2001:106). According to Chappius, Stiggins, Arter and Chappius (2005:35), teachers must perform the following tasks:

- Determine the essential objectives to be assessed.

- Select the method of assessment.
- Develop the assessment and scoring instrument.
- Administer the assessment.
- Score the assessment.
- Analyse the assessment results.
- Provide student feedback.
- Reflect on strategies to improve results.
- Implement those strategies intended to increase student achievement.

According to the Assessment and Reporting Unit Learning Policies Branch Office of Learning and Teaching (2005:9) assessment as learning establishes students' roles and responsibilities in relation to their learning and assessment. It engages students in peer and self-assessment and promotes students' confidence and self-esteem through an understanding of how they learn. In general, assessment as learning:

- involves students monitoring their learning and using feedback from this monitoring to make adjustments and changes to their skills and understandings;
- establishes students' role and responsibility in relation to their learning and assessment;
- empowers students to consider strategies for learning and taking action;
- involves students in self-assessment and peer-assessment;
- promotes students' self-esteem and self-confidence through an understanding of how they learn to learn;
- develops students' capacity to reflect on the learning and to contribute to their future learning goals;
- enhances students' life-long learning skills; and
- emphasises the process of learning as it is experienced by the student.

2.5.3 Assessment of learning

Assessment of learning is also referred to as summative assessment (Moss & Brookhart, 2009:7). Summative assessments are designed to reveal what students have learned after a certain period of instruction (McTighe & O'Connor, 2005:10). According to Opolot-Okurut (2006:4), summative assessment is conducted at the end of a course or programme. It is a snapshot at the end. The results of summative assessment are usually used for grading of students or for accreditation at the end of a programme (*ibid.*). Common summative assessments include chapter tests, unit tests, course finals, annual achievement tests and college placement tests. Summative assessment results are also used as a means of comparing instructional effectiveness of teachers and the strategies they use; to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum; to compare and rank school districts; and to compare and rank countries' educational systems (Harlen, 2007:68).

Fisher and Frey (2007:4) explain that summative assessments are typically used to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and services at the end of an academic year or at a pre-determined time. The goal of summative assessments is to judge student competency after an instructional phase is complete.

In the past few years, educational researchers have studied the use of summative assessment to improve student learning, teaching practice, and curriculum. Harlen (2007:55) found that properly developed summative assessment data can be used effectively to evaluate curriculum and instructional practice, and thereby improve student learning.

Assessment of learning is an important element of the assessment process. It informs what has been learnt and can demonstrate learning over time. It has been the most common form of assessment practiced by teachers. In general, assessment of learning:

- enables students to demonstrate what they know and can do;

- describes the extent to which a student has achieved the learning goals, including the standards;
- uses teacher judgements about student achievement at a point in time;
- is supported by examples or evidence of student learning;
- ensures consistent teacher judgements through moderation processes; and
- is used to plan future learning goals.

2.6 ASSESSMENT METHODS USED IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

An assessment method refers to the various strategies and techniques that instructors might use to acquire assessment information. Assessment methods are tools or instruments in which instructors are using to measure students' academic work. According to Linn and Miller (2005:26), an assessment method refers to any of a variety of procedures used to obtain information about student performance. McAlister (2011:7) also states that assessment methods specify the assessment instruments which are used. Assessment methods should be appropriate for and compatible with the purpose and context of the assessment. Smimou and Dahl (2012:24) add that methods of assessment are teaching practices used to judge how well a student has performed in class, based on various measures as determined by the instructor or the educational system to assess students' achievements.

Alquraan (2012:125) emphasises that, since well-developed assessment methods have a more positive impact on students' achievement, higher education institutions are constantly encouraged to use and utilise effective assessment methods that enhance the learning process.

There are many different assessment methods used in tertiary education. When deciding which assessment method to use, both the learning outcomes and the learning activities need to be considered so that appropriate assessment methods are aligned and used. Chan (2007:38) states that no single assessment is able to thoroughly cover the learning progress or achievement of students. According to Brookhart and Nitko (2008:36), using multiple assessments give students many

opportunities to show what they know. Different assessment methods are best suited to assessing different types of student learning outcomes, so instructors should try to match the two as effectively as possible. It also noted that multiple-assessment strategy will draw a clearer picture of student achievement than one assessment would (*ibid.*). With the changing attitude of the young generation and students with increasingly diverse background and experience entering higher education, it is important that appropriate assessment methods are used in order to meet the needs of the students.

When assessing knowledge and understanding of the basic facts and principles of a subject, for example, the best methods are probably objective tests or short-answer tests of some sort. When assessing higher level cognitive skills such as analysis, evaluation or problem-solving, on the other hand, tests based on extended-answer questions or continuous-assessment based on essays, assignments or projects are probably more suitable. For other types of skills, practical tests, situational assessment or portfolio-based assessment might be the best way to proceed. In general, assessment methods help the instructor to empower students in their learning.

The range of assessment methods used in higher education institutions has expanded considerably in recent years. According to Chalichisa (2009:371) new modes of assessment have enriched the 'conventional' evaluation setting, formerly characterised by both multiple choice examination and traditional assessment tools. Recently portfolios, self and peer assessment, simulation and other innovation methods were introduced in higher education institutions as an assessment method (*ibid.*).

There are two broad categories of assessment methods in higher education as Dogan (2011:420) mentions. These are traditional and alternative assessment methods. Luyegu (2009:40) also asserts that most assessments can be classified as traditional or alternative. Brief description of assessment methods which are used in higher education are discussed as follows.

2.6.1 Traditional assessment methods

Traditional assessment typically consists of paper-and-pencil activities. According to Dikli (2003:13), Luyegu (2009:40), Dogan (2011:420) and Alquraan (2012:125), traditional assessment methods include multiple-choice, true/false, matching, fill-in-the-blanks, short answer and essay. Frank and Barzilai (2004:44) remark that traditional assessment in most courses of the higher education is mainly based on pencil-and-paper tests. The grade in a given subject is mainly based on a final test. Traditional assessments are single-occasion tests (Dikli, 2003:15) and involve choosing a single answer from a given set of response (Luyegu, 2009:40). That is, they measure what learners can do at a particular time. However, test scores cannot tell about the progression of learners. Similarly, they cannot tell what particular difficulties the students had during the test.

According to Luyegu (2009:41), traditional forms of assessment offer certain advantages: they are time and cost effective and measurement is consistent. However, they have been criticised for promoting a surface approach to learning, for emphasising outcomes that will not serve the student beyond the classroom, for being poor predictors of future performance, for poor content sampling discouraging students. Alquraan (2012:131) states that traditional assessment method discourages deep learning and most frequently used method to assess students' learning by instructors in higher education. Frank and Barzilai (2004:44) add that the traditional assessment methods were found less appropriate for measuring the kind of understanding the students acquired in problem based learning.

2.6.2 Alternative assessment methods

Alternative assessment is a new perspective in assessment and evaluation (Dogan, 2011:417). Alternative assessment seeks to make learning more significant and to provide a stronger link between teaching and assessment. In order to enhance the empowerment of students, alternative assessment approaches are used to assess the knowledge and skills of students that are not well captured by traditional assessment methods (Dogan, 2011:418).

Dikli (2003:15) states that alternative assessments assess higher-order thinking skills. Students have the opportunity to demonstrate what they learned. This type of assessment tools focus on the growth and the performance of the student. That is, if a learner fails to perform a given task at a particular time, she/he still has the opportunity to demonstrate his/her ability at a different time and different situation. This happens when there are alternative assessment methods (*ibid.*).

Alternative assessment is based on a philosophy and a goal that differ from those of traditional assessments. According to Dogan (2011:418), alternative assessment is supported by the philosophy of constructivism, which emphasises the importance of students constructing and supplying responses rather than selecting or choosing them. The general purposes of alternative assessment are to motivate students to do their best work, build the self-confidence and self-concept of students, show improvement in students' work over time, and show the best work of students in a specific area.

Alternative assessment practices differ from traditional paper-and-pencil tests in that they are designed to provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, as well as to learn from the assessment process, itself (Casebeer & Alquraan, 2011:25). Unlike traditional test-based assessments, alternative assessment practices allow for the integration of assessment and instruction in a manner that facilitates active student learning. Alternative assessment may include peer assessment, debates, observation, group work, student self-assessment, project or seminar works and presentations, portfolios, the use of technology in the assessment process, or the assessment of multiple drafts of written work or projects (Dikli, 2003:14; Dogan, 2011:420-421; Casebeer & Alquraan, 2011:25).

According to Luyegu (2009:41), alternative assessment has been criticised for subjectivity, large amounts of time required to develop, among other problems. On the other hand, the objectivity of standardised tests holds a host of questions like how the domain of questions was selected and who selected them. As long as reliability and validity are addressed, alternative assessment is viable assessment of student progress and attainment.

There is no best way to assess learners' academic work. There are pros and cons of both types of assessments (traditional and alternative). According to Dikli (2003: 18), a balanced approach between traditional and alternative assessment is critical. While deciding what assessment strategy to use, instructors need to consider the issues such as content, context, audience (*ibid.*). Having clearly defined the objectives, appropriate assessment tools need to be utilised. Depending on the nature of the instruction, a combination of both assessment techniques might be useful.

2.7 CONSIDERATIONS IN QUALITY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

When the instructors assess their students' learning, the assessment technique they are using should achieve the desired qualities like validity, reliability, fairness and objectivity. According to Oermann and Gaberson (2009:29), if the assessment achieves the qualities like validity, reliability, practicality, and objectivity, fair, useful and also the principles then, we can call it quality assessment. Opolot-Okurut (2006:7) notes that quality examination and assessment practice require that the tests and examinations that are used to possess the characteristics validity and reliability. Van de Watering and Van der Rijt (2006:134) support the above idea that a high quality assessment should be a valid and reliable measurement.

2.7.1 Validity

Validity is central to any assessment. It is about the purpose of the assessment, whether the form of the assessment is fit-for-purpose, and whether it achieves its purpose (Stobart, 2012:233).

Validity in assessment refers to the extent to which an assessment measures what it purports to measure (Swerdli, 2009:172). Additionally, according to Bloxham and Boyd (2007:24), validity means that assessment tasks are assessing the stated learning outcomes. Lambert and Lines (2000:7) also assert that an assessment task is said to be valid when it tests what it sets out to test.

According to the South African Qualifications Authority National Qualifications Framework (2001:17), in order to achieve validity in the assessment, assessors should:

- state clearly what outcome(s) is/are being assessed;
- use an appropriate type or source of evidence;
- use an appropriate method of assessment; and
- select an appropriate instrument of assessment.

2.7.2 Reliability

Reliability is defined as the degree to which assessment produces consistent results (Nitko and Brookart, 2007:43). According to Tony (2011:9), reliability refers to the extent to which scores/results are repeatable and stable; that is, it must be possible to produce the same results on repeated trials.

According to Bloxham and Boyd (2007:38), assessment tasks should be generating comparable marks across time, across markers and across methods. For example, reliability is demonstrated when different markers make the same judgements about an assignment or when one marker makes consistent judgements about a piece of work at different times. Overall, despite the Quality Assurance Agency, QAA (2006:7) point of view higher education institutions to implement principles and procedures for reliable assessment, the evidence on this matter is depressing (Elton & Johnston, 2002:11). In addition, reliability requires that assessment of the same learning by different modes should render similar outcomes (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007:38).

2.7.3 Fairness

The other element that has to be considered in the practice of assessment is fairness. It is an important element in assessment due to its impact on student effort in their learning (Struyven, Dochy & Janssens, 2005:333). Fairness can be defined as treating all individuals equally and giving all individuals an equal opportunity to contribute to the research process or, in the case of assessment

research, to demonstrate their ability (Hamidi, 2010:5). Vandeyar and Killen (2006: 42) add that assessment is fair when it is not biased for or against any particular group of students. Respondents in the study by Vandeyar and Killen study (*ibid.*) had the following to say regarding fairness in assessment:

Assessment is fair to all learners if it gives them all a chance to achieve according to their different abilities, it is neither biased to very clever students nor to weaker students, it must consider a wide array of learners. They also said that, a fair assessment would be one in which all learners have equal opportunity to do well, without cultural or language bias.

According to the South African Qualifications Authority National Qualifications Framework (2001:17), fairness in assessment would constitute the assessment process is clear, transparent and available to all learners.

Wyatt-Smith and Cumming (2009:105) also remark that fairness in assessment involves both what precedes an assessment (for example, access and resources) and its consequences (for example, interpretations of results and impact) as well as aspects of the assessment design itself. They used the term 'equity' interchangeably with 'fairness'. They described that, equity does not imply equality of outcome and does not presume identical experiences for all—both of these are seen to be unrealistic, but it asserts that assessment practice and interpretation of results need to be fair and just for all groups (Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2009:106).

According to Wyatt-Smith and Cumming (2009:116), fairness is both essential and elusive. It is the appeal to fairness that has made educational 'measurement' a pivotal part of most cultures. We have argued that different groups being allowed to sit, and be judged by, the same test is a simplistic view. Fairness needs to be linked to equality of opportunity, which includes access to similar resources and curricular opportunities. The more familiar, and narrower, discussion of bias in testing is only a small part of this.

In general, according to the South African Qualifications Authority National Qualifications Framework (2001:16), unfairness in assessment would constitute the following:

- Inequality of opportunities, resources and appropriate teaching and learning approaches in terms of acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills;
- Bias in respect of ethnicity, gender, age, disability, social class and race in so far as that the assessment approaches, methods, instruments and materials do not take into account these differences;
- Lack of clarity in terms of what is being assessed;
- Comparison of learners' work with other learners, particularly in terms of diversity of learning styles, home language, values, gender, race, life experiences, etc.

2.7.4 Objectivity

When instructors create their own assessment and assess student's academic work, objectivity is a valid issue. Objectivity means lack of bias, judgment and prejudice. According to Anderson (2008:13) in the field of tests and measurement, objectivity means that the scores assigned by different people to students' responses to items included on a quiz, test, homework assignment, and so on are identical or, at the very least, highly similar.

According to the above idea, an assessment is said to be objective if it is free from personal biases in interpreting its scope as well as in scoring the responses. Nitko and Brookart (2007:43) defined that objectivity is the degree to which two or more qualified evaluators will agree on what quality rating or score to assign a student's performance.

Jae and Cowling (2009:51) state that considerable literature suggests that university students are concerned that instructors and professors are not always fair when they assign grades. Jae and Cowling (*ibid.*) further note that an instructor's ability to fairly and objectively grade a student's work is hindered in part by biases in the grading process. Bias can take many forms and is often present in the human propensity to judge others; as human beings we cannot be entirely free of bias when we form opinions, impressions, and judgments about other people. Jae and Cowling (*ibid.*) add that, in the educational realm, bias can lead instructors to grade student effort inappropriately, resulting in less-than-fair or inaccurate

measurement of student progress. In the interests of performing more objectively, educators should attempt to identify and, as far as possible, remove bias from the educational process. In general, objectivity means that if an assessment is marked by different people, the score will be the same. In other words, marking process should not be affected by the marking person's personality.

2.8 ASSESSMENT PRACTICES OF INSTRUCTORS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Assessment in higher education is a complex phenomenon and pervasive, yet has received comparatively little critical attention (Leathwood, 2005:307). Its role has always been crucial in education (Dysthe, 2004:1) and it is one of the most significant areas of an educational system (McCulloch, 2007:2). Experienced educators concede that efficient assessment strategies are an essential part of high-quality educational practices and that they should provide adequate guidance for students' progress. Cheng, Rogers & Wang (2008:9) state that university instructors' classroom assessments play a central role in and inevitably influence their teaching and their students' learning. According to Norton, Norton and Sadler (2012: 4), in the higher education sector, there has been considerable pressure on lecturers to improve their assessment, marking and feedback practices.

Assessment is an essential component of learning and teaching (Cordiner, 2011: 4) and plays a central role (Cheng, Rogers & Hu, 2004:361; Aravjo-Alvined & Nacud, 2007:1).

Cordiner on the same page noted that assessment refers to all processes employed by academic staff to make judgments about the achievement of students in units of study and over a course of study. These processes include making decisions about what is relevant evidence for a particular purpose, how to collect and interpret the evidence and how to communicate it to intended users (students, parents, university administrators) (Harlen, 2005:207).

The instructors' degree of assessment competence has a huge influence on the course being taught. Cheng *et al.* (2004:360) suggest that instructors spend a major part of their own time creating a variety of assessment instruments, and observation procedures, and making, recording and synthesising results both formal and informal reports as part of their daily teaching. Gibbs (2006:12) also strengthen the above idea that lecturers can end up spending more time each week marking than they do in classrooms.

Assessment is an integral part of faculty teaching and student learning (Walstad, 2001:281). Instructors spend a substantial amount of time evaluating student understanding through classroom tests, quizzes, homework, papers, and projects. They then use that information to assign course grades. Assessment, however, goes well beyond testing and grading. Assessment is thus a multi-dimensional activity and information resource for instructors and students (*ibid.*).

For students to be fruitful and to have knowledge and understanding in their area of study, the assessment practices of instructors will have its own great value. In this regard, Tanggaard and Elmholdt (2008:98) note that assessment practices always influence student behaviour and attitudes. If the assessment practices did not implemented well in universities, they may have low predictive ability of success up on graduation (Maxwell, 2012:686). Yet assessment tasks have a huge impact on the quality of learning.

Tertiary assessors and students participate in assessment activities intended to measure the attainment of valued learning outcomes relevant to the discipline or profession. Teaching a certain course requires an instructor to make many instructional decisions that can be analysed from a decision making perspective. Perhaps the most difficult problem is the selection of the type of classroom test that best assesses student achievement. Instructors usually prefer tests that are easy to construct (Walstad, 2001:281). Instructors who wish to make their assessment more reliable and rigorous, as well as more effective in improving students' learning, need more than technical help to do so.

Tertiary assessment practices are high stakes for persons (whether assessor or student), the credibility of qualifications (including how each is regarded by employers or professional registration bodies) and the academic reputation of the institution. Thus, it is surprising that more attention has not been focused on the measurement of tertiary teaching and learning outcomes.

Maxwell (2012:687-688) described that to produce quality university assessment tasks, there are criteria that have to be considered. Therefore, assessment is most effective in the following instances (*ibid.*):

- It is used to engage students in learning that is productive.
- Feedback is used to actively improve student learning.
- Students and assessors become responsible partners in learning and assessment.
- Students are inducted into the assessment practices and cultures of higher education.
- Assessment for learning is placed at the centre of subject and programme design.
- Assessment for learning is a focus for staff and institutional development.
- Assessment provides inclusive and trustworthy representation of student achievement.

2.9 PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTORS ABOUT THEIR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Susuwele-Banda (2005) undertook a PhD study into teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment and their current classroom assessments practices. The result of Susuwele-Banda's study shows that teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment have influence on their classroom assessment practices (*ibid*: 129). In higher education institutions also, instructors' perception may affect their practices of assessment. In relation to this, MacLellan (2004:20) notes that, in higher education institutions, academics' conceptions of assessment may affect their assessment practices.

In a study performed by Samuelowicz and Bain (2002, in Nguon, 2013:26), respondents viewed assessment in different ways. Some perceived that assessment enabled student learning while others placed emphasis on the importance of giving feedback on students' work where further help was needed. Others perceived that the main purpose of assessment was to grade students. Some instructors perceived the purpose of assessment was to assess students' abilities in reproducing information, while others considered the purpose of assessment was to assess students' ability to integrate, transform and use information.

MacLellan's research (2004:23-25) used a qualitative approach to explore lecturers' perceptions of authentic assessment. The findings of MacLellan's study revealed five key themes: the purposes of assessment, assessment approaches, the types of learning to assess and the modes of assessment, and the use of criteria. Firstly, the purpose of assessment was to grade and rank student achievement. Secondly, the assessment of content knowledge was held to be useful, important and necessary. Thirdly, modes of assessment included oral assessment such as presentations and group discussion, practical assessment such as fieldwork experience, case studies and the creation of artefacts/materials, and mixed oral-practical assessment such as reporting on practical tasks, poster sessions and group projects. Finally, respondents indicated that students should be provided with explicit assessment criteria with the issued tasks.

2.10 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY INSTRUCTORS IN TERTIARY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Instructors are the ones who play the main role to empower students in the learning process, since they have a major influence on students' academic performance. In the enhancement of students' empowerment, the practice of instructors' assessment should take the lions share. However, to properly assess and empower students, instructors may be influenced by different factors. The factor may be related to the instructors themselves (that is, their skill with different assessment techniques, experience, workload, commitment, and

perception/belief), students (that is, cheating, commitment, and perception/belief), resources (that is, reference books, laboratory equipment, internet accesses, etc.), time constraints and class size. Duncan and Noonan (2007:3) note that it is important to know how instructors' grading practices and assessment strategies are influenced by types of classroom learning conditions (i.e. classroom size, instructors' training, teaching experience, grade level, and subject area). The following section will introduce the factors to gain a clear picture about the way they affect instructors' assessment practices.

Chan (2007:52) identifies eleven difficulty areas contributing to the non-use of multiple assessments in elementary school teachers. The areas are: increased teacher workload, time-consuming activities, subjective grading, lack of familiarity with multiple assessment techniques, difficulty grading, expensiveness, more material than can be taught in the time available, an excessive number of students per class, an excessive number of classes, and difficulty working with parents, among others.

Consequently, the result showed that, time constraints with work overload contexts, large class size, and time-consuming activities mostly contributed to teachers' non-use of multiple assessment. These difficulty areas may create problem on instructors in higher education institutions not to implement multiple assessment methods. Therefore, in this study, I will identify the aforementioned and other factors and assess whether or not they influence instructors' assessment practices in the empowerment of students in higher education institutions.

2.10.1 Instructors' skill regarding different assessment techniques

Instructors' understanding of the various types of assessment and their application in higher education institution plays a major role in using different measures to assess students' abilities. In higher education, there are many types of assessment techniques implemented by instructors to assess students understanding. However, if they have limited skill in not using the different assessment techniques, it is difficult to assess students understanding effectively.

Regarding this J.M. McMillan (2001), the National Research Council (2001:17) and Popham (2003:26) explains that classroom assessments to be effectively applied, instructors must possess appropriate knowledge of their subject area, possess relevant assessment skills and have access to high quality teaching resources. Iqbal, Azam and Abiodullah (2009:47) note that higher education teachers (instructors) need professional and practical support for developing assessment skill and strategies and building assessment literacy. According to Siggins (2001: 5), assessment literacy comprises of two skills: first is the ability to gather dependable and quality information about students' achievements and the second is the ability to use that information effectively to maximise students' achievements. In general, according to Iqbal *et al.* (2009:57), university teachers need to improve their knowledge of assessment techniques and quality practices. J.M. McMillan (2001) also notes that educators require specific assessment skills to enable them to effectively apply or develop appropriate assessment tools, to use assessment results, to make decisions about individual learners, to improve learning, and to provide information to parents, and others.

The other issue related to instructors is the skill required to plan for assessment. In this regard, Tarekegn (2001:89) noted that absence or poor planning of a test is observed on the side of instructors. According to Tarekegn (2001:89), sometimes it is observed that there is a disproportionately heavy weighting of test items calling for factual recall.

Brookhart (2011:3) states that the American Federation of Teachers, National Council on Measurement in Education and National Education Association developed seven standards for teacher competencies in educational assessment of students in 1990. According to the committee members, a standard is defined as a principle generally accepted by the professional associations. In this regard assessment is defined as the process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about students, to give feedback to the students about his or her progress, strengths, and weaknesses, to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy, and to inform policy. The assessment competencies included here are the knowledge and skills critical to a teacher's role as educator. It is understood that there are many competencies beyond assessment competencies

which lecturers must possess. By establishing standards for teacher competence in student assessment, the associations subscribe to the view that student assessment is an essential part of teaching and that good teaching cannot exist without good student assessment. Therefore, teachers should have the following skills while they are assessing their students' performance (Brookhart, 2011:3):

- Teachers should be skilled in choosing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.
- Teachers should be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.
- The teacher should be skilled in administering, scoring and interpreting the results of both externally-produced and teacher-produced assessment methods.
- Teachers should be skilled in using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement.
- Teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments.
- Teachers should be skilled in communicating assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences, and other educators.
- Teachers should be skilled in recognising unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information.

These skills are important for instructors/lecturers in higher education institutions. Therefore, it is good for instructors in higher education institutions to adapt these skills in the practice of student assessment.

2.10.2 Instructors' lack of experience

According to the Ethiopian Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) (2011:49), the majority of university instructors are young and inexperienced and lack training in pedagogy. This may create problem on the side of instructors not to properly assess students' learning in a proper way. Iqbal *et al.*

(2009:56) note that university teachers (instructors) may not be fully aware of the learning potential of the different assessment techniques or may have concerns to use the different assessment techniques in their classroom. For both cases professional development of university teachers may be suggested to ensure better assessment practices in university classrooms.

If instructors have limited teaching experience, their assessment practice may also be limited. That means, if instructors have a better teaching experience, they may have exposure to different assessment techniques. A research finding of Chan (2007:49) in school situation shows that relationship between teachers teaching experience and their practices of using multiple assessments shows statistically significant difference. That is, Chan tested and found that the practice of teachers having a teaching experience of 3-5 years and 6-10 years is better than teachers having a teaching experience of less than 2 years and more than 11 years (*ibid.*). In higher education institution level, this study will give answer for the relationship between experience and assessment practices.

2.10.3 The problem of overcrowded classrooms

The number of students in the class may have effects on instructors' ability to apply various teaching, learning and assessment approaches. If the number of students in a certain class is high, it is difficult to assess all students performance with variety of assessment techniques and difficult to give appropriate feedback based on the assessment result for each student. According to Allen-Ile and Scholtz (2011:64), the variety of assessment practices adopted by lecturers increases the smaller the average class size taught. This is indicative of the fact that academics are more inclined to experiment with different types of assessment practices if the class size is more manageable. In the assessment of students in overcrowded classes the instructors are limited to use formative assessment and with less and more superficial feedback to the student (Rust, 2001:4). The finding of Niikondo's (2011:37) study shows that, large class size is the first problem that negatively affects assessments.

Niikondo adds that a lecturer teaching a class size of more than 200 students in one classroom cannot effectively assess students with more than three tests or assessments per semester due to fatigue of the lecturer. Even in marking examination scripts the fatigue of the lecturer may also affect the assessment (*ibid.*).

For effective instructional delivery and high achievement, the class size should not exceed 25 students (Jones, 2006; Finn, Gerber & Boyd-Zaharias, 2003 in Masole & Howie, 2013:217). Lecturers concurred that large class sizes affected their performance assessment:

Right now, the average class size is 35. It's a big size. You can't be effective in assessment. Once you are at the other end of the garden, a student could be using a tool inappropriately and you can't see that. You just come and assess the end-product without seeing the processes (*ibid.*).

According to Messineo, Gaither, Bott and Ritchey (2007:126), the sheer number of students in overcrowded classes limits an instructor's ability to implement discussion, timely feedback, and active problem solving. Published in the International Electronic Journal of Mathematics Education in Melbourne, research conducted by Jungic, Kent, and Menz (2006:2) on teaching in overcrowded classes has revealed that it is easy to ignore the importance of human interaction when instructing large numbers of students – i.e. classes containing over 200 students in big university lecture halls. During their study, Jungic *et al.* (2006:2) noted that the instructors lectured too quickly and teaching/learning became impersonal, which was often overwhelming for the students. They further noted that the most effective way to use time efficiently in overcrowded classes was to prepare typed lecture notes for students in advance and reduce students' level of active involvement in the learning process.

Murdoch and Guy (2002:274) note that instructors in the small sections can provide clarification and assuring that groups stayed on task but in the large section instructor could not monitor all groups. They concluded that, smaller numbers of students scored significantly higher on the final exam than did students

in the large section. A study performed by Gossmann (2008:63) found that large classes influence the type of assessment especially the marking of essay type question and large class size does not influence what you assess but how you assess.

2.10.4 Time constraint

Another factor that influences instructors' assessment practice is shortage of time. According to Norton *et al.* (2012:3), research findings suggest that lecturers feel that one of the barriers to good assessment and feedback practice is time limitation. If there are time constraints, instructors may be unable to develop appropriate assessment instruments and mark the students' work and give feedback on time. Norton *et al.* (2012:17) found that lack of time due to workload prevents the lecturer giving good quality feedback. Nguon (2013:94) also found that time constraints are barriers in implementing the alternative assessment tasks.

2.10.5 Instructors' beliefs

When beliefs about assessment are particularly negative or conflicting, the quality of learning can be adversely affected. Therefore, academics belief about assessment may have a central role in their decision making for classroom assessment practices. According to Samuelowicz and Bain (2002:198), the particular beliefs held by instructors and students about assessment have a significant impact on teaching and learning practice influencing the practical teaching approaches teachers choose and the learning approaches adopted by students. Wren, Sparrow, Northcote, and Sharp (2009:11) note that the specific nature of beliefs and perceptions guides the practical approaches to teaching, learning and assessment that university teachers and students adopt and exerts a strong influence on the quality of learning. Shepard (2000, in Wren, Sparrow, Northcote & Sharp, 2009:11) argues that, because beliefs and perceptions are context specific, it is critical that course teams have access to an intimate knowledge of their students views as well as insights into their own values and

assumptions, in order to understand the unique dynamics of their courses, identify problems and take the initiative in seeking effective improvements.

2.10.6 Workload

If both instructors and students are overloaded with different tasks, they are unable to do what they have planned to do. Therefore, this can be taken as a factor which negatively affects the instructors' assessment practices and instructors feel that one of the barriers to good assessment and feedback practice is workload (Norton *et al.*, 2012:3). Girma (2010:146) also notes that workload is an obstacle to improved implementation of active learning and assessment in higher education institutions.

2.10.7 Lack of resources

Lack or shortage of resources for example, reference books, laboratory equipment and internet accesses may be taken as a factor which negatively affects the assessment practice of instructors. A 2010 study conducted by Nekatibeb (2010: 127) found that inadequacy of learning materials, such as duplicating paper, photo copy machine, computer, and the like constituted the most affecting factor for teaching and assessment in higher education.

2.10.8 Problems in giving feedback

According to Mikre (2010:102), assessment without feedback and comments is less likely to enhance student learning. Feedback is a vital part in the teaching, learning and assessment process. It helps students to maximise their potential at different stages of instruction, raise their awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, and identify actions to be taken to improve performance. Therefore, according to Mikre (2010:111), it is a good practice if assessment procedures provide feedback and comments to students about their learning. Feedback should always contain ways for improving learning in the future. Rayment (2006:11) notes that good feedback promotes involvement and shows that the lecturer is taking an active interest in the learner. Gibbs and Simpson (2004:16) strengthen the above

idea that students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. However, problems may be observed in giving feedback which may be related to the large number of student in one class, instructor's commitment, workload and lack of knowledge. In this regard, Gibbs and Simpson (2004:10) note that, in higher education, feedback to individual students in class must have declined significantly as class sizes have increased. Writing comments on assignments, however, remains a major component of assessors' workload in higher education. Brookhart and Nitko (2008:3) also remark that instructors who simply give students a grade on a paper or test are not providing enough feedback to help students improve. Feedback must be integrated into your instructional process in order to improve learning.

2.11 THE INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTORS' DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON THEIR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The instructors teaching experience, training background and level of education may have an influence on their practice of assessment. According to Desta (2004: 76), the expansion of higher education institutions in Ethiopia in the recent years is an opportunity for many citizens who did not have access to tertiary education. On the other hand, the situation is a challenge for the higher education institutions particularly in terms of ensuring minimum standards and maintaining quality. One of the concerns along this point is quality of staff. Desta (*ibid.*) points out that lack of adequate staff in terms of qualifications, pedagogical training and experience are the challenge that the newly emerging higher education institutions face. Martínez, Stecher and Borko (2009:80) also note that the extent to which different lecturers are able to accurately assess student achievement is related in part with their educational, professional, and personal backgrounds. For example, variation may be associated with differences in teaching experience or with differences in content area or pedagogical professional development (Rodriguez, 2004 in Martínez *et al.*, 2009:80).

2.11.1 Assessment and teaching experience

Teaching experience of an instructor may have an influence on his/her assessment practices. Even though there is no study that shows the relationship between instructors' assessment practices and their teaching experience in higher education institutions, there are some studies that consider this relationship in schools. Research findings on whether or not teachers' varied classroom practices (mainly assessment activities) correspond to varied teaching experience are mixed. Some studies have found that teachers' reactions to change (such as pedagogical innovations like assessment) can be influenced by their professional experience. For instance, a study by Alkharusi (2011:45,47) revealed that, in analysing test items, communicating assessment results, writing test items, using performance assessment and grading statistically significant differences was observed across teaching experience. Alkharusi concluded that, as teaching experience increases, teachers self-perceived assessment skills tend to increase. Bol, Stephenson, O'Connell and Nunnery (1998, in Alkharusi, 2011:41) investigated that teachers frequent uses of traditional and alternative assessment methods in relation to teaching experience, grade level, and subject area.

Study results showed that the most experienced teachers indicated the use of alternative assessment more often than the least experienced teachers. These research findings may serve as a base for the present study even if the level/situation is different.

According to Norton *et al.* (2012:4), newly qualified lecturers from "hard" disciplines (e.g. natural and physical sciences) were less likely to follow desirable assessment practices and more likely to be affected by "constraints" than their colleagues from the "soft" disciplines (e.g. social sciences and humanities). In general in Ethiopia context, Kebede, Lestrade, Teshome and Tikele (2011:49) notes that most of the instructors lack experience and training in using efficient, valid and fair forms of assessment.

2.11.2 Assessment and training background

Like teaching experience, the training background of instructors may have an influence on their assessment practices. According to UNESCO and UNICEF (2012:27), many studies have demonstrated that students taught by teachers who have acquired strong skills in pedagogy and corresponding certifications tend to perform better than those taught by teachers without such training, although the effects of training and certification cannot be generalised due to large variations in the quality of training and certification standards.

The efficiency of any teaching and learning process is basically determined by the quality of the instructor (Nega, 2001:2). According to Nega (2001:2), this means that having all the necessary knowledge of the subject matter does not signify that he/she will be the best instructor. Besides, every instructor must be equipped with pedagogical skills, which are of paramount importance in the teaching and learning process. According to Zewdie (2001:12), instructors may have knowledge of the subject matter in higher education but teaching and assessment are more than knowledge of the subject matter. Teaching needs a special educational skills and awareness about students.

According to Desta (2004:75), most instructors in higher education institutions in Ethiopia have no training on teaching. Compared with the finding on teaching experience, there seems that there exists agreement in the literatures about the effect of training on instructors' classroom practices, i.e. the more the instructor has obtained trainings on assessment, the more likely he/she would practice it in the classroom. Accordingly, if the training obtained is contextualised and if instructors are committed to practice what is obtained in trainings; trained instructors have high probability to implement assessment than untrained ones.

According to Masole and Howie (2013:215), lack of training could be a contributing factor to agriculture lecturers' reluctance to effectively assess their students and to inflate marks, as one lecturer remarked:

Lecturers feel that this is the area they can influence the final grade of the students. They tend to increase the marks of the students. There is a lot of subjectivity.

That means the educational and pedagogical coursework may have an influence on the effectiveness of instructors assessment practices.

2.11.3 Assessment and level of education

As to the above discussed variables, the education level of instructors may have an influence on their assessment practices. According to McMillan (2003:41), different studies demonstrated that significantly positive relationship between instructors' education in assessment and their practices were observed. That is, sufficient and useful assessment education is likely to facilitate instructors' assessment practices. It is also indicated that insufficient instructors' education level in assessment resulted in their little use of assessment tasks, even though they believed these test tasks beneficial.

2.12 PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS ABOUT INSTRUCTORS' ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Students' perception about assessment and evaluation methods of instructors plays a significant role. As Chalichisa (2009:368) reports, students' perception regarding the assessment of learning outcomes is an area that has drawn the researchers' attention because it is related to the quality and quantity of students' learning.

Perception of assessment is defined as the students' act of perceiving the assessment in the course under investigation (Van de Watering & Van der Rijt, 2006:136). Research findings of Struyven *et al.* (2005:325) revealed that students' perceptions about assessment significantly influence their approaches to learning and studying. On the same page, their finding suggested that students hold strong views about different assessment and evaluation formats. In this respect, students favour multiple-choice format exams to essay type questions. However, when

compared with more innovative assessment methods, students call the “fairness” of these well-known evaluation modes into question.

The finding of Chalichisa (2009:382) study at the graduate level showed that students’ perceptions regarding the assessment of learning outcomes by their instructors is appropriate and matches the principles of the assessment of learning outcomes discussed by authorities in the field of educational measurement. Students perceived that in the assessment of learning outcomes instructors use assessment tools that match learning objectives, and contents of instruction: assess learning outcomes at the required level, plan for the assessment of learning outcomes, use varieties of instruments, provide constructive feedback, assign grades fairly and other more principles.

Students within a classroom share common characteristics of the instructors and his or her assessment practices, and as such even though students respond differently to the same classroom assessment process, their responses may have commonality. According to a study report compiled by Ashcroft and Rayner (2004: 5), students frequently report that they perceive their assessments as unfair. Students feel particularly strongly that norm assessment does not allow them to be assessed on their own merits. Examinations are generally theoretical and so practical skills and knowledge are not adequately assessed. Ashcroft and Rayner (2004: 5) remark that, students have noted variations in standards of lecturer’s examinations and marks across departments.

2.13 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY STUDENTS REGARDING TERTIARY ASSESSMENT

In the assessment of tertiary students in the teaching and learning process, problems may be observed. This creates obstacles in empowering them through different assessment techniques to achieve better and fruitful in their study area. The following are some of the problems which might be experienced by university students regarding tertiary assessment.

2.13.1 Dependency in group work

Group work assessment is one of the most challenging and contentious forms of assessment (Spiller, 2012:2). When students are ordered to do different assessment tasks by their instructors, they have no confidence to do the given task independently. For example in group assignment, mostly small members of the group take the lions share in doing the group task and the other members did not assist and do in collaboration with each other.

The above idea is supported by the University Teaching Development Centre (UTDC) Guideline (2004:5); that is, one group member will sometimes take on the responsibility of doing the bulk of the work. As it is discussed in University Teaching Development Centre guideline (2004:17) university education is based on an assumption that final grades reflect individual student achievement. However, the result which is given at the end is for all members of the group.

2.13.2 Lack of involvement and motivation

Student involvement in the assessment process and being motivated will have significant contribution in the empowerment process and presents a powerful opportunity for learning. According to Falchikov (2005:117), students may be involved in assessment in a wide variety of ways. Falchikov (*ibid.*) also notes that peer assessment, self-assessment, and self or peer-testing are from the ways of students involvement in the assessment process. Peer-assessment seems to be the most popular way of involving students in assessment (Falchikov, 2005:151). Falchikov(*ibid.*) strengthens the above idea that, the more students are involved, the greater the potential of assessment to improve learning and encourage personal, academic and professional development.

The other issue related to assessments is student motivation. Sarwar, Zerpa, Hachey, Simon and Van Barneveld (2012:90) remark that when students are motivated to provide optimal performance during large-scale assessments, their estimated abilities more closely reflect their true abilities. However, most students are not motivated to attend all classes regularly and to do the assessment tasks

(for example doing project works, group works, debates etc.). Basically, at the beginning of the class, students did not show a smiling face. They question why so many different methods of assessment are needed.

2.13.3 Fear and lack of self-confidence

For example, presentation is one of the assessment techniques in the process of teaching and learning. To present the given assessment task properly, the students should have confidence. When the students are ordered to present the given task in classes, they did not clearly present. Students may do the task in a good way on paper, but when they present it, they did not perform as expected. This may be due to lack of confidence.

So, Dogan (2011:418) notes that, when instructors use different assessments like alternative assessment, the main purposes are motivate students to do their best work, build the self-confidence and self-concept of students, show improvement in students' work over time, and show the best work of students in a specific area.

2.13.4 Cheating

Cheating on a test or examination is the process of using unauthorised means or methods for the purpose of obtaining a desired test score or grade. This may range from bringing and using notes during a closed book examination, copying another test taker's answer or choice of answers during an individual test, or even sending a paid substitute to take the test. According to Nath and Lovaglia (2009: 3), cheating may include plagiarism, stealing a test, fabricating academic documents, purchasing term papers, or copying from someone. Nath and Lovaglia (*ibid.*) also note that, good students complained that others (poor students) benefited unfairly from cheating. If a substantial portion of students cheat, it is assumed that they are not learning much. Their time and energy is devoted to simulating knowledge rather than acquiring it. Most students present the others work (like projects works, term papers etc.). This is the problem which is observed in the assessment of tertiary students and creates difficulties to see the real performance of a particular student in the teaching and learning process.

Therefore, instructors may face difficulties to empower students using different assessment methods.

According to Opolot-Okurut (2006:6), examination malpractice affect the reliability of the results that are obtained, consequently it puts into question the trustworthiness and quality of the results.

2.13.5 Students' lack of awareness regarding different assessment methods

Due to lack of awareness in different assessment methods, problems are observed in the assessment of students in higher education institutions. In this regard, Munoz and Alvarez (2007:4) state that lack of understanding of the assessment process and lack of objectivity and reliability about their own work are the problems observed by students in the assessment process in the case of self-assessment. According to a study by Berhanu (2001:88), there is a significant difference between the way students were tested in the high schools and the way they test in higher education institutions. This means, the assessment practice implemented in higher education institutions and in high school level is different. Due to this, first year university students are very much worried about their achievement because their future career is dependent on their performance at the first level.

2.14 STRATEGIES OF STUDENT EMPOWERMENT THROUGH INSTRUCTORS ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Student empowerment is possible only through active involvement in their learning. According to Leach *et al.* (2001:294), empowerment in the assessment context encourages learners to take direct action, both as individuals and in groups, to assess their own work, to critique the assessment regime and that of the academic world, and to negotiate practices different from those that are proposed.

One of the best ways to empower students is to get them organised and to allow them to make their own decisions. In higher education, one of the most important issues is the choice of assessment methods to enhance their understanding. It is important in the sense that students come to universities to achieve desirable learning outcomes, and the way learning outcomes are assessed at universities fundamentally affects the way students learn (Tian, 2007:387). In relation to this, Havnes (2004:159) points out that improving student learning imply improving the assessment system. In practice, assessment directs student learning, because it is the assessment system that defines what is worth learning.

In order to enhance students empowerment, instructors' use different assessment methods. However, the assessment they are using may not be powerful and effective. Effective assessment methods empower students. Different literature states that to empower students in the teaching and learning process, the recommended assessment techniques are self-assessment and peer assessment. Ljungman and Charlotte (2008:289) explain that these two assessment methods - self and peer assessment – have been found to enhance learning outcomes such as improved thinking processes but also to be of help for students to improve their own learning. Nulty (2011:496) notes that both peer and self-assessment involve students in the identification of criteria for judging work and making judgements using those criteria. Bloxham and Boyd (2007:30) describe peer and self-assessment as crucial elements of helping students to learn from their assessment and become more autonomous learners. Lee (2006:61) notes that peer assessment and self-assessment are important forms of assessment that engage pupils in talking about their learning and therefore help them to become self-critical and independent.

2.14.1 Self-assessment

Self-assessment is an assessment which allows students to assess their own performance. It also refers to the involvement of students in making judgments about their own learning, particularly about their achievement and the outcome of their learning. According to Nulty (*ibid.*), self-assessment is defined as the involvement of students in identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their

work, and making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards. It is also noticed that self-assessment increases the role of students as active participants in their own learning. As Tan (2009:361) states, it has been popular to advocate student self-assessment practices as a means of 'empowering' students in the assessment process.

According to Tan (2004:651), students' lack of power is framed as an obstacle to their learning and student self-assessment is commonly advocated as an opportunity for students to gain a measure of power or control in the assessment process. The assumption is that student participation in the assessment process enhances student empowerment. As Tan (2009:361) explains, in the past few years, some writers have questioned the assumption that self-assessment practices will automatically empower students in the assessment process.

Student self-assessment is a popular practice for enhancing student empowerment in the assessment process (Tan, 2004:651). According to Tan (*ibid.*), however, in recent times various writers have questioned whether the practice of student self-assessment automatically enhances student autonomy. Some writers have even informed that students' participation in the assessment process may discipline, rather than empower, students. It is argued that student empowerment can only be realised if the ways that power is exercised over students in self-assessment practices are first understood.

As Tan (2004:652) states, student participation in grading their work may not necessarily mean that students are empowered. The practice of student self-assessment therefore does not guarantee that students are empowered in the assessment process.

2.14.2 Peer-assessment

Peer-assessment is an assessment which allows students to assess each other's performance. It is an assessment method through which the peers of a student are requested to provide information about his/her performance. It is considered by many educators and instructors to be a key technique to get students to take more

responsibility for their learning. Reinders and Lazaro (2007:8) state that, if it is conducted appropriately, peer assessment can provide several benefits for the learners. Peer-assessment has the advantage of helping students to critically examine the learning in progress. Through this, as Reinders and Lazaro (*ibid.*) explain, students understand their own learning better.

Peer assessment involves students assessing the work of other students that is their peers (Fautley & Savage, 2008:51). According to Nulty (2011:497), peer-assessment is defined as a process where students support each other to identify the standards and criteria for assessment, and to give appropriate value for the learning tasks in relation to those criteria. Peer assessment can also be effectively used for large class sizes (*ibid*: 495).

2.14.3 Instructors' contribution

Instructors/Lecturers are the building blocks of higher education institutions. Undoubtedly, instructors are the developers of positive and progressive society in any country. Instructors' contribution in the process of student empowerment will have its own great role. In this regard, Leach *et al.* (2001:293) note that student empowerment is seen as a keystone of lecturers' assessment practices. One of the contributions of lecturers to empower students in the assessment process is their encouragement. The support given to students during the teaching, learning and assessment process is vital to empower students. According to Leach *et al.* (2001:293), higher education teachers /instructors have traditionally been all-powerful in assessment processes. Leach *et al.* (2001:293) also remark that instructors decide what is to be assessed, how it will be assessed and what criteria will be used. They make the judgements about which students have met the standards.

Instructors find ways in which learners can be empowered themselves. This means that learners are encouraged to make decisions about and exercise some control over their learning. These ideas are applied in assessment. The students may be confused by the criteria against which they are assessed (Rust, Price & O'Donovan, 2003:156) if they are not informed. Lecturers should, therefore, inform

students of the criteria used in different assessment methods and also discuss these criteria with them.

2.15 SUMMARY

It is clear from the literature review that effective assessment methods enhance the empowerment of students in their learning. This is because, as it is clearly discussed above, assessment is the central element in the overall quality of teaching and learning in higher education. In relation to this, theoretical issues related to the assessment practices of instructors in empowering students in the teaching and learning are clearly presented. In addition to this, the meanings, purposes and methods of assessment in tertiary education, consideration in quality assessment practices, instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices, perceptions of students about their instructors assessment practices, the influence of instructors demographic variables on their assessment practices, the problems experienced by instructors and students regarding tertiary assessment and the strategies of empowering students through instructors' assessment practices are clearly presented.

The assessment practice being implemented in an educational institution directly affects the quality of education in that institution. Therefore, in the assessment of students' learning, instructors or other concerned bodies should consider the issues that are clearly discussed above. The next chapter deals with the educational developments and the assessment system in Ethiopian higher education institutions.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN ETHIOPIA

3.1 BRIEF INTRODUCTION ABOUT ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is geographically located in East Africa with a total area of 1.25 million square kilometres. It is an ancient country with a history of more than 3000 years and having its unique alphabets (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.CSA, 2009:15). The country has maintained its independence even during the time of colonial powers in Africa. It is a country with diverse ethnic and linguistic groups where over 80 different languages are spoken.

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa next to Nigeria with a total population size of 73,750,932 million as of 2007 (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.CSA, 2008: 7). Of these, 37,217,130 (50.5%) are males and 36,533,802 (49.5%) are females. The projected figures for the year 2013 become 86,613,986 of which 43,715,971 are males and 42,898,015 are females (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. CSA, 2012:2). The population grows annually at a rate of 2.62% which is estimated to be doubled in about 26.3 years (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. MoFED, 2008:2).

The capital city, Addis Ababa, is the cultural and commercial centre and where all government ministries, departments and financial institutions are located. It is known that Ethiopia is one of the founding members of the United Nations and has been playing an active role in African affairs, specifically in a pioneering role in the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In fact, the capital city, Addis Ababa, has been a seat for the OAU since its establishment and continues serving as the seat for the African Union (AU) today (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.CSA, 2009:15).

Ethiopia was ruled by successive emperors and kings with a feudal system of government until 1974. In 1974, the military took over the reign of rule by force and

administered the country until May 1991. Currently, a federal system of government exists and political leaders are elected every five years. The government is made up of two tiers of parliament: the House of Peoples' Representatives and the House of the Federation.

Major changes in the administrative boundaries within the country have been made three times since the mid -1970s, and, at present, Ethiopia is administratively structured into nine regional states – Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, Gambela and Harari – and two city administrations – Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa Administration Council (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.CSA, 2009:15). In each state and towns of the country, educational institutions are organised from lower level (kindergartens) to higher level (universities).

The Ethiopian economy has continued to register high overall economic growth in the first year of implementation of the Growth and Transformation plan (GTP). During 2010/11, real GDP growth rate stood at 11.4 percent (MOFED, 2012: 13). In the overall economic development strategy and the recent Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) of the country, the role of education in human resource capacity building is identified as one of the key pillars in the economic transformation process of the country. To that effect, the government has been allocating 5.5 to 6% of the GDP to education since 2006 (UNESCO, 2010b: 28). The share of public education expenditure (primary, secondary and higher education) from the total government expenditure increased from 11.28% in 1999/00 to 23.6% in 2008/09. Similarly, the share of higher education budget from the total education expenditure rose from 10.21% to 22.6% over the same years. This suggests that the Ethiopian government seems to have recognised the role of education in general and higher education in particular in boosting knowledge based economic development.

According to the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance and Economic Development report (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoFED, 2012:63), the country has registered significant changes in terms of improving access to education over the past years. Primary education participation rate has increased at an accelerated

rate. This is mainly due to the substantial increase in the enrolment rate of children in grade one. Enrolment rate for grade one surpassed the envisaged rate of 128 percent to reach 159.1 percent. This remarkable change is observed in both sexes. The number of primary schools (grades 1-8) rose from 26,951 in 2009/10 to 28,349 at the end of 2010/11. There is also an increase in the number of secondary schools (grades 9-12) from 1335 to 1517 and of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools from 15 to 458 during the same years.

The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for primary education including alternative basic education increased from 93.4% in 2009/10 to 96.4% in 2010/11. In the same year, Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for secondary education first cycle went up from 39.4% to 38.4% and secondary education second cycle increased from 64.3% to 57.8%. By 2010/11 the total enrolment in TVET was 371,347 (215,559 students were enrolled in government institutes and 155,788 students were enrolled non-government institutes) (MOFED, 2012: 65-67). However, whether the increase in government expenditure on education is in correlation with the rapidly increasing student population could be debatable. We can also notice that the rapidly increasing number of primary, secondary and TVET school graduates would ultimately create unprecedented demand for and pressure on higher education unless a parallel growth of opportunities is created at tertiary level.

3.2 THE STRUCTURE OF FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ETHIOPIA

Educational reforms adopted in 1994 changed the structure of the system (UNESCO, 2010a:6). Prior to this date, general education was divided into primary (grades 1-6), junior secondary (grades 7 and 8), and senior secondary education (grades 9-12), with national examinations at the end of each level. This system has been in place since 1962.

The new system includes ten years of general education, consisting of eight years of primary education and two years of general secondary education (grades 9 and

10), followed by two years of upper secondary (preparatory) education (grades 11 and 12). Primary education is divided into two four-year cycles. The first cycle of primary education is expected to achieve functional literacy, while the second cycle prepares students for further education. General education is completed at the end of the first cycle of general secondary education (grades 9 and 10). The use of local languages as medium of instruction has been introduced in the first years of primary education.

According to UNESCO (2010a:7), the system is designed to enable students to leave the formal school system with higher levels of literacy and numeracy and with opportunities for pursuing technical and vocational training at different levels of the education system. The first cycle of secondary education (grades 9 and 10) is intended to enable students to identify areas of interest for further training. The second cycle (grades 11 and 12) should prepare students for continuing their studies at the higher education level or selecting their own vocations.

Technical and vocational education and training is institutionally separate from the regular education system and runs in parallel with it. Training is offered at the exit points of the academic system (grades 4, 8 and 10).

According to UNESCO (2010a:7) and the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. MoE, 2012:4), the following categories indicate the levels of the Ethiopian Education system.

Pre-School Education

Pre-school education lasts two years and caters to children aged 4-6. Pre-school education is not compulsory.

Primary Education

According to the new structure of the education system, primary education lasts eight years (age group 7-14) and it is divided into two cycles: basic education (grades 1-4) and general education (grades 5-8). Junior secondary schools no

longer exist, as grades 7 and 8 have become the two upper classes of the second cycle of primary education. At the end of grade 4 pupils sit a national exam and if they achieve a score of at least 50% they can continue to grade 5. Upon completion of grade 8, pupils sit the Primary School Certificate Exam.

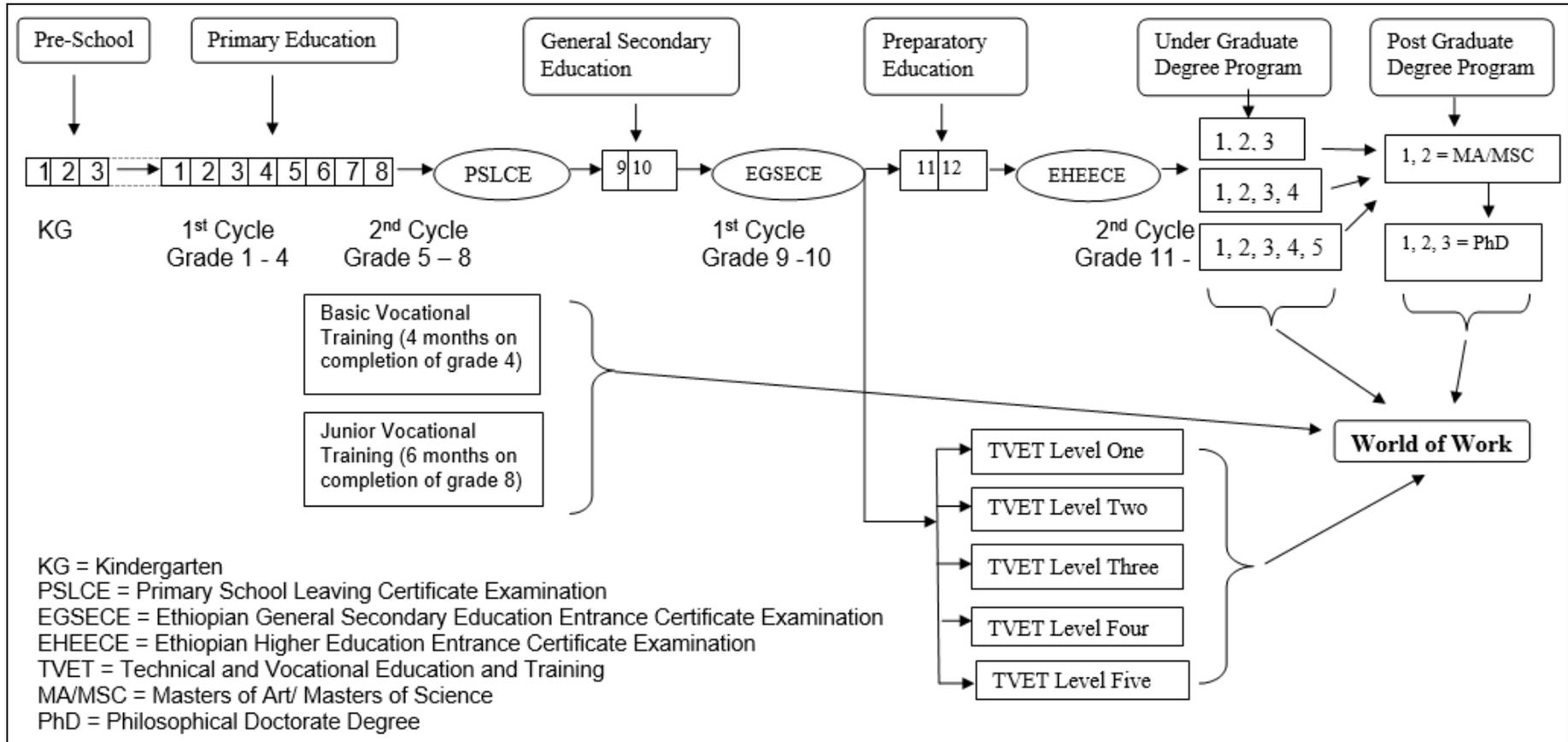
Secondary Education

As mentioned, secondary education is organised into two cycles, each lasting two years. At the end of grade 10, students sit the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination. The second cycle, covering grades 11 and 12, prepares students for continuing their studies at the higher education level or selecting their own vocations. At the end of grade 12, students must sit the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination to enter higher education institutions. Upon completion of grade 10, students can pursue technical and vocational education and training leading to a level 1 certificate (one-year programme), a level 2 certificate (two-year programme), or a diploma (three-year programme).

Higher Education

Tertiary and higher education is provided by specialised institutes, colleges and universities. Post-secondary non-university vocational and technical education programmes offered by colleges and technological institutes leading to the award of diploma usually last between two and three years. Primary Teacher Training institutes offer one-year courses qualifying for teaching in the first cycle of primary education. A diploma awarded by Teacher Training Colleges is required to teach in the second cycle of primary education. Secondary school teachers must have at least a first degree (three-year bachelor's degree programmes). At the university level, programmes leading to a bachelor's degree take three to four years to complete (five years in the case of law and pharmacy; six years in the case of medicine and veterinary science). At the postgraduate level, master's degree programmes last a minimum of two years; programmes leading to a specialisation diploma last between three and four years. The duration of doctoral degree programmes is normally three to four years.

The following figure shows a clear picture of the structure of the Ethiopian education system available including the examinations that influence education options.



(Source: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. MoE, 2012:4)

Figure 3.1 Structure of the Ethiopian Education System

3.3 OVERVIEW OF THE ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education has a very crucial role in the development of any country. As the major source of skilled manpower, higher education has a multi-faceted effect on any society. Be it politically, economically, culturally, psychologically, higher education is at the heart of any nation. Therefore, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE (2010:9) as it is mentioned in Education Sector Development Program (ESDP-IV) currently, the main goal of higher education is to develop highly qualified, motivated and innovative human resources and produce and transfer advanced and relevant knowledge for socio-economic development and poverty reduction with a view to turning Ethiopia into a middle-income country by the year 2025.

According to the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 2002:102), in the past, higher education was not given due attention; its curriculum was not relevant to the country's problems; and its capacity was not adequate with the country's trained manpower needs both in quantity and quality. Thus, after a close examination, solutions have been suggested for the problems of the type of education given, the handling of teachers and students, the organisation of research and finance.

Nations are successful when they exhibit an appreciable degree of educational development, and schools are successful when students are able to develop skills and knowledge (with critical inquiry) that, in turn, enable them to be successful learners in multivariate, multidisciplinary, and diverse content areas of education. In this regard, Ethiopia is lagging behind other African nations although, in the last half a decade, a significant measure had been undertaken in the development of higher education (Nega, 2012:108).

According to a World Bank (2003:1) report, although Ethiopia possesses a 1,700 year tradition of elite education linked to its Orthodox Church, secular higher education was initiated only in 1950 with the founding of the University College of Addis Ababa. This university and other subsequent higher education institutions

strived, with considerable early success, to meet international standards. Between the early 1950s and the mid-1980s, Ethiopia had only two universities and no graduate studies had begun in earnest till 1979.

During the reign of the Derg, sometime in 1984, the Alemaya College of Agriculture, which was part of Addis Ababa University, was elevated to a university. Between the mid-1990s and the turn of the century, several universities –such as Mekelle, Bahir Dar, Debub (then Hawassa and Dilla), and Jimma– as well as colleges –such as Ambo and the Civil Service College, and the Addis Ababa College of Commerce (now part of Addis Ababa University) – were added.

Higher education in Ethiopia has a relatively short history of some 60 years only, but during the past ten years it has undergone both major quantitative and qualitative change. A succession of new policies was designed and implemented, with the Education and Training Policy (1994) being the first major framework for systems reform and transformation. The policy stressed issues of quality and relevance in educational programs and emphasises the linkage of higher education and the country's development (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 2010:62).

According to Ashcroft (2010) and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE (2012:57), Ethiopia is radically expanding its higher education sector from two federal universities to 22 in just over a decade (in 2006/07) and now 31 universities (in 2010/11). In addition, three colleges operating under the auspices of different Ministries such as the Defence University College and other Military Academy Colleges (under Ministry of National Defence), the Ethiopian Civil Service College (under Ministry of Capacity Building), more than 70 private higher education institutions (Nega, 2012:105). The private higher education institutions could be dichotomised as those, which got accreditation of the ministry, and those, which are pre-accredited (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 2010: 62). The huge expansion of student numbers is mainly in new regional universities and a vibrant private system. The Ethiopian government sees higher education as an important plank in its strategy for social and economic development. Thus, the

overall enrolments have increased from 149,694 to 319,217 in the planning period of ESDP III (2004/05 to 2008/2009) of which 55,264 are enrolled in non-government institutions and this accounts 17.3% of the total enrolment. It shows that the private higher education institutions have an observable contribution to the education sector. As a consequence, the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for higher education increased from 3.6% in 1999 to 5.3 % in 2008/2009. This means that the Ethiopian higher education has now come close to the African average in GER of 6% in 2000 (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 2010: 62).

However, despite addition of several universities and colleges:

Higher education in Ethiopia is not well developed. It faces problems associated with the quality and relevance of programs of studies and research, equity, resource constraints, and inefficient resource utilization. (Yizengaw, 2004:5)

Recently, the higher education system is expanding rapidly and a huge number of students with different backgrounds are joining the higher education institutions (Nega, 2012:110). Such expansion rate is also expected to continue over the coming years to meet the goals of the Education Sector Development Program IV (ESDP IV), which covers the period from 2010/11 to 2014/15. According to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE (2010:62) Education Sector Development Plan IV (ESDP IV), one of the major new concerns will be the improvement of the quality and the employability of university graduates. The sustainable development of research capacity for knowledge creation and technology transfer in priority sectors is another one.

The table indicated below shows the list of Ethiopian Public universities ordered on the basis of their years of establishment. In this regard, there are three categories. That is, senior, medium and the recent new universities.

Table 3.1 List of Ethiopia public universities in order of their establishment

S. No.	Name	Short Name	
1	Addis Ababa University	AAU	Senior universities established before 2007
2	Haromaya University	HRU	
3	Bahir Dar University	BDU	
4	Mekelle University	MU	
5	Gondar University	GU	
6	Jimma University	JU	
7	Arba Minch University	AMU	
8	Adama University	ADU	
9	Hawassa University	HWU	
10	Dilla University	DU	Medium Universities established in 2007
11	Ambo University	AUC	
12	Debremarkos University	DMU	
13	Dire Dawa University	DDU	
14	Debrebirhan University	DBU	
15	Axum University	AXU	
16	Wollo University	WOU	
17	Wollega University	WU	
18	Mizan-Tepi University	MTU	
19	Jigjiga University	JGU	
20	WolayitaSodo University	WSU	
21	Semera University	SU	Recent/new universities established in 2011
22	MedaWelabu University	MWU	
23	Woldiya University	WDU	
24	Welketie University	WKU	
25	Wachamo University	WCU	
26	Adigrat University	AGU	
27	Addis Ababa Science and Technology University	AASTU	
28	Debretabor University	DBT	
29	Asossa University	ASU	
30	Metu University	MEU	
31	BuleHorra University	BHU	

In addition to the above listed universities, Ethiopian Civil Service University, Defence University College, Kotebe College of Teachers Education and Telecommunication and Information Technology College and the accredited non-

government higher education will be administered also via Ministry of Education (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 2012:57).

3.4 HIGHER EDUCATION PROCLAMATIONS OF ETHIOPIA

The proclamation is the first national higher education regulation in Ethiopian history that accorded autonomy of administration, academic freedom and accountability to universities. According to Nega (2012:106), the higher education proclamation that provided a comprehensive legal basis for the establishment and development of higher education institutions in Ethiopia was endorsed by the Council of Peoples' Representatives of FDRE in June 2003 based on the education and training policy and on the need to establish legal framework for the higher education sector (Proclamation No 351/2003, articles 7 & 43).

This proclamation clearly indicates the objectives and expected outcomes, powers and duties, and criteria for the establishment of higher education institutions, educational programs and curriculum, and mechanisms of evaluating the quality and relevance of programs.

The Higher Education Proclamation has also laid down a system that enables higher education to produce adequate, quality and skilled manpower to meet the demand of the country. Besides this, the proclamation has also created an appropriate legal framework for research to ensure that research conducted by HEI will be problem-solving and directed towards the utilisation of the potential resources of the country. The academic freedom and accountability of the HEIs as well as their administrative autonomy, which is provided by law, determined the direction of the private higher education institutions in order to promote their contribution in expanding education and conducting research (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, MoE, 2005:13).

According to Nega (2012:107), there was limitation in the 2003 higher education proclamation (proclamation No. 351/2003). That is, lack of clear provisions regarding the establishment of an independent and autonomous private

accrediting organisation, lack of provisions for accreditation of public universities, lack of provisions for the autonomy of HERQA and HESC, lack of incentives and principles in public fund allocation vis-à-vis quality assurance as well as absence of mechanisms to enforce implementation of requirements are some instances. Due to these limitations, the proclamation was modified in 2009 and proclamation is called proclamation No. 650/2009. It contains almost all the provisions contained in the 2003 proclamation with additions or modifications on some articles.

3.5 ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Assessment is an important element of the teaching and learning process whatever the level of education is. The assessment practice being implemented in an educational institution directly affects the quality of education in that institution. It provides information that can be used in a variety of educational decisions. As assessing students' learning is central to instruction, a significant amount of instructors' time is spent in assessment activities. Assessment of the learning outcomes is part and parcel of the education at all levels.

Recognising this fact the Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia (FDRGE) Education Policy (1994:18) states that continuous assessment in academic and practical subjects, including aptitude tests will be conducted to ascertain the formation of all rounded profile of students at all levels. The mode of evaluation varies from one level of education to the other, depending on the requirements of each course and program.

To make the teaching, learning and assessment process more feasible, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education on behalf of the government of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia organised two agencies on the bases of the proclamation (Proclamation No 351/2003). Two agencies are Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) and Higher Education Strategic Centre (HESC).

The Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA), now renamed Education and Training Quality Assurance Agency (ETQAA) is established as an autonomous agency having its own legal personality with the objective to assure the relevance and quality of higher education offered by any institution (Proclamation No. 351/2003). It is one of the key agencies responsible for guiding and regulating the higher education sector in Ethiopia. The mission of HERQA is to help ensure a high quality and relevant higher education system in the country. The agency mandated to report on the relevance and quality of higher education offered by all higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ethiopia.

Higher Education Strategic Centre (HESC) is another autonomous organ established to formulate vision and strategy for the higher education system of the country (Article 86 number 1). This clearly means that, while it is accountable to the Ministry, it is separate from it, able to make decisions on its own account, except where Civil Service rules or the Proclamation state otherwise. This also gives HESC the right to be proactive and express its views independently without external pressure or interference. In that way, HESC aims to enable the system to remain compatible with the country's needs and international developments.

According to Girma (2010:99), HERQA will carry out institutional quality audits of all HEIs as one of its key activities. An institutional quality audit is an in-depth analysis and assessment of the quality and relevance of programs and of the teaching and learning environment. Equally importantly, an institutional quality audit will assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of a HEI's approach to quality care, its systems of accountability and its internal review mechanisms.

As it is mentioned in HERQA document QA04/06/V1 (2006:7), an essential contribution to a HERQA institutional quality audit is a Self-Evaluation Document prepared by the HEI. An institutional quality audit will seek to verify claims of quality and relevance made in a Self-Evaluation Document. HERQA has identified the following ten key aspects of operation which will form the focus points for quality audits in Ethiopian HEIs.

- i. Vision, Mission and Educational Goals
- ii. Governance and Management System
- iii. Infrastructure and Learning Resources
- iv. Academic and Support Staff
- v. Student Admission and Support Services
- vi. Programme Relevance and Curriculum
- vii. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- viii. Student Progression and Graduates Outcomes
- ix. Research and Outreach Activities
- x. Internal Quality Assurance

According to Girma (2010:100), teaching, learning and assessment, among others, are the ways in which a service is delivered. They require measurement of quality. In light of this, HERQA, in its document QA 02/06/V1 (2006:7), points out that every HEI must employ appropriate teaching, learning and assessment methods to ensure effective implementation of its programs. The assessment practice being implemented in an educational institution directly affects the quality of education in that institution.

Girma (2010:139) identifies the current practice of teaching, learning and assessment of public higher education institutions of Ethiopia as it is extracted from quality audit report of HERQA. Specifically, the assessment system that is practiced in higher education institution is summarised as follows: The mid-semester and end-of-semester closed examinations predominate as tools of student assessment in almost all institutions under consideration. However, other forms of student assessment such as laboratory reports, projects and classroom activities are used in some departments. Instructors in the different meetings, appreciate the value of alternatives ways of assessing students. However, it was claimed that continuous assessment could not be applied or it is hardly practiced. The reasons forwarded include large class sizes and the lack of student readiness to be assessed in such modes.

Girma (2010:111) adds that the quality of assessment is vital to the HEIs' claim about the quality of its graduates, which defines the trust and confidence of stakeholders and the public. Taking this into account, the HEIs appear to have no specific policy document on student assessment apart from the one which is indicated in the senate legislations in public universities and some efforts in private ones.

According to a study report by Ashcroft and Rayner (2004:5), students frequently report that assessment is perceived as unfair. Where norm referencing is used, they feel particularly strongly that it does not allow students to be assessed on their merits. In relation to this, Girma (2010:111) states that, while there are few cases in the use of criterion-referenced marking, grades are mostly determined by using the norm referenced system where students are evaluated in relationship to one another rather than the criterion-referenced grading that measures how well students do relative to pre-determined performance levels. Such a system is not appropriate to maintain standards between different cohorts of students.

In the view of Ashcroft and Rayner (2004:5) examinations which give in the selected Ethiopian HEIs are generally theoretical and so practical skills and knowledge are not adequately assessed. Students often receive no feedback of the quality of their work and feel that they have insufficient opportunities for redress if they feel that marking has been unfair. There is generally no system of double marking. In general, there is no clear standard assessment policy which is applicable in both public and higher education institutions in Ethiopia.

3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter gave a brief introduction about Ethiopia, the structure of formal education system, higher education system, the higher education proclamations, and the assessment system in Ethiopian higher education institutions. It is clear from the this review that there are changes from time to time to enhance and keep the quality and relevance of the education and access of higher education to the citizens of the county. This is based on the education policy designed and the

proclamations to achieve the mission of the formulated policy. Specifically, the proper implementation of the teaching, learning and assessment systems in higher education institutions is the core element in the enhancement of quality.

The next chapter deals with the research methodology that is, research design in order to explain how the research has been conducted and different issues related to research participants, sampling technique, data collection instruments, methods of data analysis and other methodological issues.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review (Chapters 2 and 3) enabled me to, firstly, explore the psychological theories of learning and assessment in tertiary education, and secondly, discuss educational developments and the assessment system in Ethiopia. It also provided the necessary framework of reference for this study and enabled me to have a clear understanding of assessment. Furthermore, it helped me to interpret instructors' assessment practices in relation to the enhancement of students' empowerment.

This chapter focuses on the research design and methods that were used in the empirical investigation phase. The aim of the research design and data collection was to answer the main research question that guided this study namely, how do instructors assessment practice at a university in Ethiopia, influence/enhance student empowerment? Specifically this study aims to do the following:

- Review the existing scientific literature regarding assessment at tertiary level.
- Determine the perceptions of students about their instructors' assessment practices.
- Determine the perceptions of instructors about their assessment.
- Investigate the influence of instructors teaching experience, training backgrounds and level of education on their practice of assessment.
- Identify assessment methods that instructors use predominantly.
- Explore the problems of instructors and students regarding assessment experience.
- Determine how student empowerment can be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices.

The current chapter deals with the methodological considerations of the study. Specifically, the first section begins with the research design and approach of the study. The second section presents the population, sample and sampling technique used in the study. The third section discusses the description of variables and the fourth section presents the research methods like data collection instruments, methods of data analysis, validity and reliability as well as trustworthiness. Finally, the issue of ethical considerations is presented.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH OF THE STUDY

The research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems; the plan is the complete scheme or programme of the research (Kumar, 2011:94). It includes an outline of what the investigator will do from writing the hypotheses and their operational implications to the final analysis of data (*Ibid*). It is a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer the questions validly, objectively, accurately and economically. Further, the research design encompasses all the structural aspects of a study (Gay & Airasian, 2002:109-117). Creswell (2014:247) also notes that research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in research study.

A research approach can be classified into qualitative, quantitative or mixed-method research (Mouton, 2001:270). This study is based on the pragmatic mixed-methods approach. Pragmatism, as a philosophical discourse, uses the criterion “what works?” to determine which method to use to answer a specific question (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:23).

According to Johnson and Christensen (2008:33), starting from 1990s, many researchers rejected the *incompatibility thesis* (the proposition that one cannot mix quantitative and qualitative research) and started advocating the *pragmatic* position, which holds that both quantitative and qualitative research are very important and often should be mixed in a single research studies. According to

pragmatism, what is important, regarding knowledge, is not abstract philosophy but what works in practice. Cohen *et al.* (2011:23) state that pragmatism suggests that 'what works' to answer the research question is the most useful approach to the investigation, be it a combination of experiments, case studies, surveys or whatever, as such combinations enhance the quality of the research.

In the pragmatic view, research design should be planned and conducted based on what will best help the researcher to answer his/her research questions. Pragmatism holds that programs or actions that are demonstrated to work are the ones that we should view as currently being the most valid (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:33).

In this study, a mixed-method approach was chosen in order to address the main research aim as well as its objectives. Mixed-method research is a research project in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study or programme of inquiry (Creemers *et al.*, 2010:116). De Vos *et al.* (2005:360) and Gay, Mills and Airasian, (2011:481) also note that mixed-method studies are those that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study. According to Creswell (2012:535), the basic assumption is that the uses of both quantitative and qualitative methods, in combination, provide a better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself.

Creswell (2014:218) states that at the general level, a mixed-method approach is chosen because of its strength of drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research and minimising the limitation of both approaches. At a particular level, a mixed-method approach provides a sophisticated, complex methodology to research that appeal to those on the forefront of new research procedures. Creswell (2014:8) adds that, at a procedural level, it is a useful strategy to have a more complete understanding of research problems or questions.

Cohen *et al.* (2011:22) note that mixed-method research recognises and works with the fact that the world is not exclusively quantitative or qualitative; it is not an either/or world, but a mixed world, even though the researcher may find that the research has a predominant disposition to, or requirement for, numbers or quantitative data.

The rationale for mixing is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient by themselves to capture the trends and details of the situation. Gay *et al.* (2011:481) note that the purpose of mixed-method research is to build on the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone.

The broad reasons for linking quantitative and qualitative data include triangulation, complementarity, initiation, development and expansion (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:36; De Vos Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011:445; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009:141). According to the authors, triangulation enables confirmation or corroboration or correspondence of results from different methods, while complementarity seeks elaboration, enhancement and clarification of results using different methods. Initiation seeks new lines of thinking through attention to surprise or paradoxes, whereas development enables to use the results from one method to inform the other method. Finally, expansion enables to extend the breadth and range of inquiry using different methods.

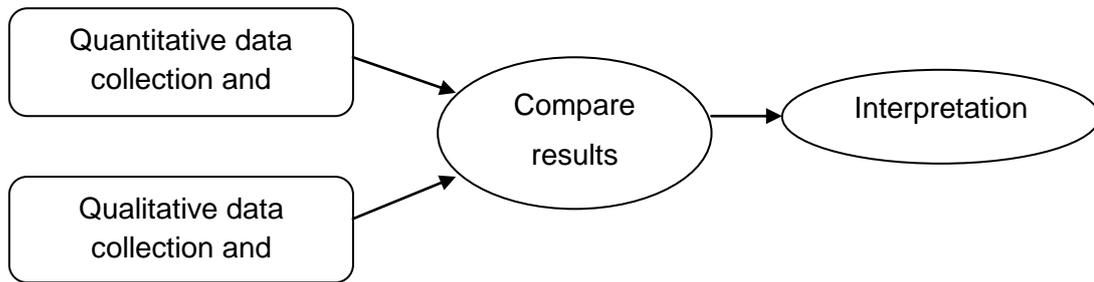
Denscombe (2008, in Cohen *et al.*, 2011:22) suggests that mixed-method research can: (a) increase the accuracy of data; (b) provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study than would be yielded by a single approach, thereby overcoming the weakness and biases of single approaches; (c) enable the researcher to develop the analysis and build on the original data; and (d) aid sampling.

Creswell (2012:540) and De Vos *et al.* (2011:440) identify six mixed-method designs commonly used in educational research, with the first four as the basic

designs in use today and the last two as complex designs that are becoming increasingly popular. The designs are convergent parallel, explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, embedded, transformative and multiphase design. From these listed designs, this research mainly follows the convergent parallel design, because this design gives chance to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyse it and is appropriate for the research question raised. The detail description of the design which is used in this study is presented here under.

According to Creswell (2012:540), the purpose of a convergent parallel (triangulation) mixed-method design is to simultaneously collect both quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, and use the results to understand a research problem. A basic rationale for this design is that one data collection form supplies strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other form, and that a more complete understanding of a research problem results from collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. As Gay *et al.*, (2011:486) verify, the strengths of the qualitative data (e.g. data about the context or setting) offset the weakness of quantitative data (e.g. external validity), and the strengths of the quantitative data (e.g. generalisability) offset the weakness of the qualitative data (e.g. context dependence). De Vos *et al.* (2011:442) also adds that it is a one-phase design in which the researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative methods during the same time frame and with equal weight to best understand the phenomenon of interest. It generally involves the concurrent, but separate, collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in order to compare and contrast the different findings to see the extent to which they do or do not agree with each other. According to these authors (*ibid.*), triangulation design enables the researcher to produce more complete and valid conclusions.

The following figure gives a clear picture of the convergent parallel design used in this study.



(Source: Creswell, 2011: 541)

Figure 4.1 The Mixed-Method Design used in this Study

Mixed-method designs contain two dimensions: time order and paradigm emphasis (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:35). The time order refers to concurrent versus sequential, while the paradigm refers to equal status versus dominant status (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:35; De Vos *et al.* 2011:444). Concurrent timing occurs when the researcher implements both quantitative and qualitative methods during a single phase of a study at the same time while sequential timing occurs when the researcher implements the methods in two distinct phase, using (collecting and analysing) one type of data before using the other type. In a mixed-method approach the quantitative (QUAN) and qualitative (QUAL) data collection are concurrent with the intention to offset the weaknesses inherent to one method with the strengths of the other (Creswell, 2012:540). The weight is usually equal on the two methods; but in practice priority might be given to one or the other. According to De Vos *et al.* (2011:444), weighing refers to the relative importance or priority of the quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the study's questions. There are two possible weighing options for a mixed-method design, namely to give equal weight to both quantitative and qualitative methods so both play an equally important role in addressing the research problem, or unequally where one method will have a greater emphasis within the study than the other one.

The mixed-method design is employed in this study with the intent to get a complete and comprehensive picture of the topic under study. The quantitative approach was used to generate data from different sources about the perception of instructors and students regarding the assessment practices in higher education institutions, the influence of instructors' demographic variables on their assessment practices and the assessment methods used and the problems instructors experience when assessing students.

However, the quantitative data may not enable deeper explanations for why a phenomenon occurs. This dimension necessitates the use of qualitative data. Hence, the qualitative approach was employed to get data that captures the different dimensions of respondents' experiences regarding assessment practices in enhancing students' empowerment. It may also help to get deeper insights of the issues under consideration and capture some trends that may emerge from the data.

The specific type of research design that is used for the quantitative phase of this study is a descriptive survey. In descriptive survey research, the researcher selects a sample of subjects and administers a questionnaire to collect data (Creswell, 2009:36). Therefore, descriptive survey is used to describe the practice and perception of the respondents about the assessment practices implemented in the university.

The research design used for the qualitative approach is Phenomenology. According to Creswell (2014:245), phenomenological research is a qualitative strategy in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants in a study. This is to get insight into the phenomenon from the participants' views. It is also contextual. According to Creswell (2009:16), a context represents a specific set of properties that pertain to phenomena and a contextual study tends to be descriptive and exploratory. The context of this study is student empowerment through instructors' assessment practices at a university in Ethiopia. In this phase, interviews were used.

4.3 POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A population is a complete group of entities sharing some common set of characteristics and a sample is the group of specific population elements relevant to the study (Gay *et al.*, 2011:129). Creswell (2012:142) also defines a sample as a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study in order to make generalisations about the target population. The process of making a selection to include in the study is sampling (Gay *et al.*, 2011:630). In the selection of the sample, both probability sampling (the process of selecting a sample using a sampling technique that permits the researcher to specify the probability, or chance, that each member of a specified population will be selected for the sample) and non-probability sampling (the process of selecting a sample using a sampling technique that does not permit the researcher to specify the probability, or chance, that each member of a specified population will be selected for the sample) are used (Gay *et al.*, 2011:628).

From the probability sampling, simple random sampling (i.e. each member of the population under study has an equal chance of being selected and it is most popular and rigorous form of probability sampling) and from the non-probability sampling, purposive sampling (i.e. the process of selecting a sample that is believed to yield the richest data pertaining to the focus of the study) and available sampling (a method of choosing a subjects who are available or easy to find) are used (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:153; Creswell, 2012:143). According to Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2006:140), purposive sampling is the sampling procedure most often used in qualitative research. In short, for the quantitative part simple random sampling and for the qualitative part purposive and available samplings are used.

According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009:187), parallel mixed-method sampling is the most appropriate of the various mixed-method designs available. Parallel mixed-method sampling in probability sampling techniques is used to generate data for the QUAN strand and purposive sampling technique is used to generate data for the QUAL strand. These sampling procedures occur independently.

The setting selected to conduct the research is a university in Ethiopia. Instructors and students of this university are the population of this study. All instructors who were on duty and second and third year students are the target population of the study. My reasons for selecting this university for my study are two-fold: first, the problem in question is particularly serious at this university, and second, it is my workplace and so affords me greater better support from instructors and students during data collection. At the university, there are six colleges – Social Science and Humanities, Natural and Computational Science, Business and Economics, Technology, Health Science, Agriculture – as well as the School of Law. There are different departments within each college but not in the school of law. Specifically stated, instructors and second and third-year students from the above listed colleges were considered as participants for the study. Second- and third-year students of these colleges are chosen to reduce the possible threats to internal validity that will come due to biased selection of participants (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinge, 2005:60). That means, since first year students have no previous university learning and assessment experience, the researcher did not consider them and fourth- and fifth-year students are also excluded because their number is too small and they are only found in two colleges, that is, technology and health sciences. Thus, due to the above reasons second- and third-year students are considered to be appropriate participants of the study.

Instructor and student participants were selected from the target university using stratified and simple random sampling techniques (for the quantitative part) and purposive and available sampling techniques (for the qualitative part). The actual number of participants from different departments of each college was selected on random basis. From the 32 departments in different colleges, instructors and students from 6 departments were selected for the pilot study and instructors and students from 18 departments were reserved for the main study. Accordingly, a total of 24 departments were considered in this study. The departments were selected on a random basis: four from each college. In general, from the total of 5944 second- and third-year students and 450 instructors, 600 students and 210 instructors were selected as a sample. The sample sizes were determined by taking Cohen *et al.* (2011:147) sample size determination procedure for random

samples for the 95% confidence interval (see Table 4.1). According to Cohen *et al.* (2011:147), the sample size for a population size of 450 is 207, for a population size of 5000 is 357 and for a population size of 7500 is 365. Therefore, using the sample size determination procedure used by Cohen *et al.* (*ibid.*) as a reference, I considered 210 instructors and 600 students as samples for the study. The sample students' number was increased from 365 to 600 simply to make the sample more representative and more students could easily have been enjoined to participate within in the data collection time. The students were selected from three different departments of each college. For this study, after obtaining the list of students and instructors from the colleges and the university programme design directorate, I assigned numbers to each individual to select the actual respondents using a random number table.

Table 4.1 Sample Size for Random Samples

Population size	Sample size at 95% confidence level
30	28
50	44
75	63
300	168
350	183
400	196
450	207
500	217
600	234
2500	333
5000	357
7500	365
10000	370

(Source: Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:147)

Table 4.2 Summary of Instructor and Student Participants from Different Colleges for the Quantitative Part

No.	Colleges	Students		Instructors	
		N	n	N	n
1	Social Science and Humanities	547	90	74	34
2	Natural and Computational Science	1072	120	77	35
3	Technology	2191	120	102	47
4	Business and Economics	948	90	74	34
5	Health Science	558	90	78	36
6	Agriculture	628	90	45	21
Total		N = 5944	n= 600	N= 450	n= 210

Key: *N = total number of students and instructors, n = the number of samples*

4.4 DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES USED IN THE STUDY

In order to investigate the empowerment of students through the assessment practice of instructors, describing variables which are used in the study is vital. The variables listed below in the table may have their own impact in the empowerment process. Following this, the data collection instruments are presented and discussed. In the instruments, different issues which help to investigate the empowerment of students through instructors' assessment practices are included based on the research questions raised.

In order to investigate the empowerment of students through instructors assessment practices, the quantitative phase of the study focused on analysing the perceptions of instructors' about their assessment practices and the perceptions of students about their instructors' assessment practices. It also focused on determining the influence of instructors' training backgrounds, teaching experience and level of education on the practices their assessment.

The variables (both dependent and independent) which are involved in this study are summarised in the table below.

Table 4.3 Dependent and Independent Variables used in the Study

Category	Variable	Description
Independent variables	Training backgrounds	It is the professional courses taken by instructors in their undergraduate or post graduate programme and classified as pedagogy and non-pedagogy background based on the pedagogy courses and the in-service pedagogical trainings taken
	Teaching experience	The number of year's instructors has stayed in the teaching profession.
	Level of education	The status of instructors they have currently (such as BA, MA, PhD, etc.).
Dependent variables	Assessment practices	The way summative components of assessment are exercised by instructors
	Perception of assessment	Perception of instructors on assessment and perception of students about instructors assessment practices

The qualitative phase in the study focused on explaining the different assessment methods used by instructors, the problems experienced by instructors' in the assessment process and the mechanism used in the empowerment of students through instructors' assessment.

4.5 RESEARCH METHODS

According to Creswell (2014:247), research methods involve the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies.

4.5.1 Data collection methods

As has been mentioned in Chapter One (Section 1.5), the main objective of this research is to determine how instructors' assessment strategies at a University in Ethiopia enhance student empowerment. In this study, the survey approach was employed to generate the quantitative data. As Gay *et al.* (2011:184) state, survey data are collected by asking members of a population a set of questions, which can be administered in a questionnaire. Qualitatively, an interview was used to strengthen the data that were obtained using questionnaire.

With regard to the mixed-method approach, the study adopts data triangulation. Gay *et al.* (2011:486) point out that triangulation gives broad coverage of education characteristics and allows for crosschecking of information. The aim of triangulation is to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Hence, questionnaires and interviews were employed for data gathering in the present study as follows:

4.5.1.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is an instrument by which participants in a study complete and return to the researcher (Creswell, 2012:382). Self-administered closed and open-ended questionnaire were used based on the sub-questions and sub-aims (see from Section 1.4 and 1.5). A closed-ended question forces the respondents to choose among specific responses while open-ended questions allow the respondents to write an extended response. The information obtained using questionnaire is from both instructors and students.

Structure and scoring of instructors' questionnaire

The final version of the instructors' questionnaire contains items related to biographic information, assessment practices and perception about the assessment practices they implement. It also contains items related to the assessment methods used predominantly and the problems they encounter while they assess their students. In general the instructor's questionnaire has five parts/sections including the biographic information. These are explained in detail as follows:

Part I: Biographic information's of instructors (5 items)

This part of the instructors' questionnaire included 5 items that yielded biographic information of each participant which deal with the college and department they work, teaching experience, educational qualification, pedagogy courses he/she

takes during his/her stay in colleges/universities and whether he/she has taken in-service pedagogical training or not.

Part II: Items on assessment practices (29 items)

This part of the instructor questionnaire consisted of 29 items which are about their practice of assessment in the teaching and learning process in higher education institutions. For each item, there are five options (five point Likert Scale) which is coded and scored as follows:

- 1 = never
- 2 = rarely
- 3 = sometimes
- 4 = frequently
- 5 = always

From the 29 items, item number 27 is negatively scored. Negatively scored refers to the scoring of negatively stated statements of the questionnaire items in the process of data analysis. (See Appendix A)

Part III: Perception of instructors about their assessment practices (40 items)

This part of the questionnaire consists of 40 items regarding their perception about assessment and their practices. For each item of this part, there are five options (five point Likert Scale) which is coded and scored with the following meanings:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = undecided
- 4 = agree and
- 5 = strongly agree.

From the 40 items, item number 30, 31, and 35 are negatively scored. (See Appendix A)

Part IV: Assessment methods predominantly used (16 items)

This part of the instructors' questionnaire consists of 16 items. The items are a list of possible assessment methods used by instructors. Each item of this part has five options which aimed to see the degree to which the listed assessment methods are being used. The options are coded and scored with the following meanings:

- 1 = never
- 2 = rarely
- 3 = sometimes
- 4 = frequently
- 5 = always

In addition, for this part there is space for respondents to list other assessment methods if they used.

Part V: Problems instructors experience regarding assessment (10 items)

This is the last part of the instructors' questionnaire which consists of 10 items. In this part, the possible factors/problems are listed. For each item, there are five options (five point Likert Scale), which is coded and scored with the following meanings:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = undecided
- 4 = agree and
- 5 = strongly agree.

In addition, a space is provided to list other problems if they experience not to implement assessment properly in their teaching and learning process.

Structure and scoring of students' questionnaire

The final version of students' questionnaire has three parts/sections (see Appendix B). These are background information of students, perception items about the assessment practices of their instructors and open-ended questions about the assessment practices. The structure and scoring of items in these sections are described as follows:

Part I: Background information (4)

This part of the students' questionnaire had three items that yielded background information of individual students. These are year of study, college and department in which they enrolled. From the three items/variables, one, that is, "college" is used for analysis. However, the other items are used simply to have information about the respondents. For the purpose of analysis and to make ready to enter into SPSS, the colleges in which students are enrolled are coded as follows:

- 1= Social Science and Humanities (SSH)
- 2 = Natural and Computational Sciences (NCS)
- 3 = Business and Economics (BE)
- 4 = Technology
- 5 = Health Sciences and
- 6 = Agriculture

Part II: Students perception about instructors assessment practices (39 items)

This part consisted of 39 items. The items are about the perception of students regarding their instructors' assessment practices. For each item there are five options (a five point Likert scale) ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, and it is coded and scored as follows:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = undecided

4 = agree and

5 = strongly agree.

Part III: Open-ended questions (3 items)

This is the last part of the students' questionnaire which consisted of 3 items. The items are open-ended questions which invite students to write different issues about the assessment methods implemented by their instructors. The three items are the following:

- i. When you are assessed by your instructor, did you face any problem? If so, what problem did you face?
- ii. Did the assessment methods that your instructors employ empower you? If so how?
- iii. In general, how do you see your instructor assessment practices?

4.5.1.2 Interview

Interview is the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:287; Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009:224). According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:292), qualitative studies typically employ unstructured or semi-structured interviews. In this research, semi-structured interview is used. Semi-structured interviews are defined as those organised around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:292). According to Lodico *et al.* (2006:124), in a semi-structured interview, researchers usually prepare a list of the questions to be asked but allow themselves the opportunity to probe beyond the protocol. The semi-structured interviews also enable the researcher to ask for further clarifications of the issues under consideration.

The interview is used to identify the different assessment methods used by instructors and the problems instructors and students experience regarding assessment in detail. It also aims to see how student empowerment can be enhanced through instructor's assessment practices.

Two versions of semi-structured interview schedules were developed and conducted with selected department heads and instructors. Six department heads one from each college were selected purposively and six instructors' one from each college were selected using available sampling methods for the interview. According to Creswell (2012:206), to best understand the central phenomenon and to develop an in-depth explanation of the issue purposeful sampling is appropriate. Both groups, that is, instructors and department heads were interviewed by using the 7-items interview protocol (see appendix C and D).

4.5.2 Data analysis techniques

In this study, the data collected through questionnaires were coded, entered, cleaned and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20) computer software. To analyse the quantitative data, both descriptive and inferential techniques were used. Descriptively, the collected data were analysed using percentages, means and standard deviations. Inferential data analysis techniques namely independent t-test and one-way ANOVA were extensively used for comparing mean differences between or among different groups considered in the study. Chi-square (χ^2) test was also used in order to see whether there is a significant difference between the rating patterns of responses of the respondents. I performed the statistical analysis myself. The α (alpha) value for test of significance is set at 0.05 level. According to Gay *et al.* (2011:345), the standard preselected probability level used by educational researchers is usually 5 out of 100 chances that the observed difference occurred by chance.

Using descriptive statistics (such as percentage, mean and standard deviation) instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices and the perception of students regarding their instructors assessment practices were

analysed. Using inferential data analysis, to see the influence of instructors' teaching experience and level of education on their assessment practices, one-way analysis of variance was used because the levels of the independent variables (i.e. teaching experience and level of education) were more than two. Independent t-test was used to see the relationship between instructors' assessment practices and their training backgrounds because the levels of the independent variables were two.

Qualitative data obtained through open-ended questions and interviews were analysed and interpreted thematically or using content analysis technique. The themes for the data analyses were derived from the research questions. On the basis of the research questions, I endeavoured to form themes or categories and make the analysis thematically. Analysis of quantitative data are displayed first and then corroborated by qualitative data analysis in the form of texts.

Table 4.4 Summary of the Research Design and Methodology

Research Approach	Research Design	Data collection instruments	Sample	Research sub-aims	Data analysis technique
Qualitative research	Phenomenology	Interviews	6 department heads and 6 instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the assessment methods instructors use predominantly Establish the problems of instructors and students regarding assessment respectively experience Determine how student empowerment can be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices 	In text forms
		Open-ended questions	600 students		
			210 instructors		
Quantitative research	Convergent parallel design	Questionnaire	600 students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the perceptions of students about their instructors' assessment practices 	Mean, standard deviation and One-way ANOVA
		Questionnaire	210 instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the perceptions of instructors about their assessment practices 	Mean, standard deviation and One-way ANOVA
		Questionnaire	210 instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is an instructor teaching experience, training backgrounds and level of education influence of his/her practice of assessment? 	t-test and One-way ANOVA
		Questionnaire	210 instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the assessment methods instructors use predominantly 	Percentage and chi-square
		Questionnaire	210 instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish the problems of instructors and students regarding assessment respectively experience 	Percentage and chi-square

4.5.3 Validity and reliability

Before collecting the main data, a pilot study was conducted to ensure reliability and validity of the instruments used. That is, the pilot testing was conducted to find out ambiguities and omissions of each item in the data collection instruments. According to Phillips and Stawarski (2008:83), a pilot test provides an opportunity to resolve anything that is confusing about the instructions, questions, or statements.

Barker (in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:237) states that pilot study is a procedure for testing and validating an instrument by administering it to a small group of participants from the intended test population. According to Mouton (2001, in De Vos *et al.*), one of the most common errors in doing research is that no piloting or pretesting is done. Therefore, a pilot study is definitely a prerequisite for the successful execution and completion of a research project and it is an integral part of the research process.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009:147), the quality of the instruments used in research is very important for the conclusions researchers draw from the information they obtain. Accordingly, researchers use a number of procedures to ensure that the inferences they draw, based on the data they collect, are valid and reliable. Therefore, pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the instruments used.

4.5.4 Trustworthiness

The methods used by quantitative and qualitative researchers to establish trustworthiness are different. For quantitative researchers, the methods used to establish trustworthiness include internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. For qualitative researchers, the methods used to establish trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. In this study the trustworthiness of the quantitative and qualitative data are presented below.

4.5.4.1 Trustworthiness of the quantitative data

In quantitative research, validity and reliability of the instruments (i.e. questionnaires) are very important for decreasing errors that might arise from measurement problems in the research study. Reliability and validity are essential to the effectiveness of any data gathering procedure (Phillips & Stawarski, 2008:81).

Validity is the quality of a data gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what it is supposed to measure (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:134). Similarly, Fraenkel and Wallen (2009:148) define validity as the meaningfulness and usefulness of the specific inferences a researcher makes based on the data collected. It is essential to ensure the validity of a data gathering tool for use. More than anything else, researchers want the information they obtain to serve their purposes. The drawing of correct conclusions based on the data obtained is referred to as validity (Colton & Covert, 2007:65). There are different types of validity. Such as face validity and content validity.

In this study, face and content validity of the instruments were ensured through expert judgments. The term *face validity* is a technical description of the judgment that the items are meaningful and relevant to the construct that is measured. Face validity simply indicates whether, on the face of it, the instrument appears to be assessing the desired qualities. On the other hand, *content validity* is the degree to which elements of an assessment instrument are relevant to and representative of the targeted construct for a particular assessment purpose. Content validity is a self-evident measurement because it relies on the assurance that the researcher can demonstrate the adequate coverage of the known field (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:203). Both the literature and the items in the questionnaire should cover the 'full breadth' of the theory on the research problem.

The pilot study provided a trial run for the questionnaire that involve testing the wording of the questions, identifying ambiguous questions, determining how long it

takes to complete the questionnaire, and if all important content has been included. A pilot study enhances the content validity of the questionnaire. Therefore, to ensure the validity, the first draft of the instruments was first given to my study supervisors when I applied for ethical clearance.

After obtaining the necessary feedback, the instruments were given to six instructors; three from English department (their specialisation is TEFL, Teaching English as foreign language) and three from Psychology Departments (their specialisation is educational measurement and evaluation and social psychology). Using the relevant comments and suggestions obtained from these individuals, some corrections were made. Hence, based on the suggestions obtained, from the instructors' questionnaire two items were removed from part II (from the 31 items) and 4 items were removed from part III (from the 44 items) because some of the items lacked face validity and some other items lacked content validity.

In general, based on the pilot study's result, content validity of the instrument was checked as follows:

- The items were thoroughly inspected for relevance and clarity.
- The content validity of the instruments, the order of the questions, omissions, vague items and terminologies were improved and made to measure what they are supposed to measure.

After the refinement of the instruments, the reliabilities of the instruments were checked via the pilot test. For this purpose, 40 students and 18 instructors from the six colleges (which are not part of the main study) were taken as a sample. The questionnaires for the pilot test were all filled out properly and returned.

Reliability refers to the consistency of the data. According to Creswell (2012:159), reliability means that scores from an instrument are stable and consistent. Scores should be nearly the same when researchers administer the instrument multiple times

at different times. When an individual answers certain questions one way, the individual should consistently answer closely related questions in the same way. Reliability is also defined as the consistency of the instrument results (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1991:250). It is also defined as the consistency of scores or answers from one administration of an instrument to another, and from one set of items to another (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009:147). It is the extent to which measures are free from error.

For example, Mehrens and Lehmann (1991:248) discuss reliability and validity in the following way:

We base decisions on data. The data may come from different sources (questionnaire, check list, etc.). In using the data for decision making, we should know something about the quality of the data. High-quality data should be weighted more heavily in our decision than poor-quality data. Technically speaking data should be reliable, and the inferences we draw from the data should be valid. The quality of the question or item is important. If one uses questions that are not worded well, the reliability of the instrument is likely to suffer.

In short, for this study the investigator tried to check and ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments (i.e. questionnaires of instructors and students) through the pilot study. The reliability of the questionnaires (i.e. the pilot and main questionnaires) was checked using the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha). This method of estimating reliability was developed by Cronbach in 1951 and it is used when the items are not scored dichotomously (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1991:256). This is generally the most appropriate type of reliability for survey research and other questionnaires in which there is a range of possible answers for each item. The acceptable range of reliability coefficients for most instruments is 0.70 to 1.00.

Therefore, the questionnaires were tested with a total of 18 instructors and 40 students which were randomly selected from the six colleges. The following table shows the summary of the reliability of the pilot and the main data of the instructors and students questionnaire.

Table 4.5 Reliability of the Pilot and Main Data

	Parts of the questionnaire	Reliability of the pilot study	Reliability of the main study
Instructors Questionnaire	Part II: Items on assessment practices	0.787 30 items	0.792 29 items
	Part III: Perception of instructors about their assessment practices	0.808 44 items	0.883 40 items
	Part IV: Assessment methods predominantly used	0.546 16 items	0.738 16 items
	Part V: Problems instructors experience regarding assessment	0.733 10 items	0.770 10 items
Students Questionnaire	Students perceptions about instructors' assessment practice	0.899 40 items	0.901 39 items

George and Mallery (2003:231) provide a standard to interpret the reliability of instruments. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability co-efficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. The closer Cronbach's Alpha co-efficient to 1.00, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. The following table (Table 4.6) shows the standard to interpret the reliability of the instruments:

Table 4.6 Standard to Interpret Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Co-Efficient

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Co-Efficient	Interpretation
> 0.90	Excellent
0.80 – 0.89	Good
0.70 – 0.79	Acceptable
0.60 – 0.69	Questionable
0.50 – 0.59	Poor
<0.50	Unacceptable

As indicated in Table 4.5, the reliability of the pilot data of the instructors questionnaire are 0.787, 0.808, 0.546 and 0.733 for part II, III, IV and V respectively. The reliability of part III of the pilot data is poor on the basis of this standard (Table 4.6). Therefore, for this part (i.e. part III), corrective measures were taken. That is, after looking the items in detail and on the bases of the experts comment and refining it, pilot study was conducted for the second time for this part only with 12 instructors and the reliability becomes 0.71. After refining all the items of the instructor's questionnaire on the bases of the instructors and experts comments, the reliabilities of the parts of the main data are 0.792, 0.883, 0.738 and 0.770. Based on the standard, these reliability coefficients are within the range of "acceptable" and "good".

The reliability of the pilot data of the student's questionnaire was 0.899. After refining the items of the questionnaire on the bases of the students and experts comment, one item was removed and the reliability of the main data of the student's questionnaire was 0.901 which is "excellent" based on the standard.

4.5.4.2 Trustworthiness of the qualitative data

According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:331), in qualitative research, the pilot study is usually informal, and a few respondents possessing the same characteristics as those of the main investigation can be involved in the study, merely to ascertain certain trends. By testing the nature of questions in an interviewing schedule in the pilot study, the qualitative researcher is able to make modifications with a view to quality interviewing during the main investigation.

The issues of validity and reliability are different in qualitative research approaches (Creswell, 2014:201). In qualitative research, validity is the degree to which qualitative data accurately measure what the researcher is trying to measure. Qualitative researchers can establish the trustworthiness of their research by addressing the credibility (the researcher's ability to take in to account all of the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained

and replacement for quantitative concept of internal validity), transferability (the researcher's belief that everything is context-bound and replacement for quantitative concept of external validity), dependability (the stability of the data and replacement for quantitative concept of reliability) and conformability (the neutrality or objectivity of the data collected and replacement for quantitative concept of objectivity) of their studies and findings (Gay *et al.*, 2011:392). According to Guba and Lincoln (in Kumar, 2011:184-185), these are the indicators that reflect the validity and reliability in qualitative research.

By purposively selecting the participants, application of appropriate data-gathering strategies and research instruments, and keeping the required ethical standards for carrying out research, the credibility of the research will be achieved and becomes trustworthy.

The final consideration is objectivity. This is correspondent to conformability in the qualitative part. It is the ability to make decisions based on facts (the data) rather than on the researcher's personal feelings or beliefs. The outcome should be purely based on facts, and is unbiased, to remove subjective evaluations by relying on verifiable data. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009:111), objectivity refers to the absence of subjective judgments or lack of bias. The validity and reliability for the quantitative and qualitative part is checked on the bases of the pilot data and objectivity is the base for both. Therefore, the interpretation of results of the pilot study may contribute towards objectivity.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is very important in research. According to Gay *et al.* (2011:19), ethical considerations play a role in all research studies, and all researchers must be aware of and attend to the ethical considerations related to their studies. Ethics is concerned with what is wrong or right in conducting research. In this study, ethical considerations were upheld via the following means:

- I requested informed consent from the university academic affairs vice president as well as from all the participants for participation in the research project. I clarified to the university and participants what the topic was and how I planned to use the research report.
- I assured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity. That is, I convinced them that I would not disclose any information to the heads of their departments, deans of their colleges or anybody else and would not publish their names in the report/dissertation.
- I did not deceive participants. I ensured that participants understood as they can withdraw from the research process at any time, specifically while they filling questionnaire and in an interview session if they felt uncomfortable.
- I asked permission from the university to conduct the research and, after getting the approval letter to conduct the research, I started the data collection. This facilitated the support and cooperation of participants.
- I ensured that my thinking involved caring and fairness toward participants.
- Finally, I completed the ethical clearance and review form and submitted it to the ethics committee in college of education at UNISA and then started collecting the data, based on their feedback.

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter explained the research design and data collection techniques that were used to gather information with regard to the study. This study aims at gathering reliable and valid information through questionnaires and interviews. The study aims to answer the specific research questions that focus on the issue of the empowerment of student through instructors' assessment practices at a university in Ethiopia. In order to achieve the aims, I used mixed-method research design. From the different types of (that is, the six) mixed-method designs, this research mainly used convergent parallel/triangulation design, because this design gives chance to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyse it and is appropriate for the research questions raised.

Instructors and students of the selected university from the six colleges were the participants of the study. To select the participant samples both probability (i.e. stratified and simple random sampling) and non-probability (i.e. purposive and available sampling) sampling techniques were used. In order to achieve the aforementioned aims, I employed two instruments: questionnaire and interview. The questionnaires were developed for both instructors and students and the interviews were developed for instructors and heads of department. From the total of 5 944 students and 450 instructors, 600 students and 210 instructors were selected to fill questionnaires. However, only 562 students and 166 instructors were completed the questionnaires. Six department heads and six instructors were participated for the interview. Before collecting the main data, pilot study was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments used.

The collected quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (one-way ANOVA, independent t-test and Chi-square test) and the qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis methods. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations are also presented. The analysis and presentation of the research results are the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four, the research design and methodology were presented. This chapter presents the results of the study, that is, analysis and presentation of data. In doing so, the data collected through questionnaires are presented with the help of tables and statistical results. These results are complemented by data obtained by means of qualitative methods like open-ended questions and interviews.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

5.2.1 Biographic information of instructors

A total of 166 from 210 instructors completed and returned the questionnaire. However, before discussing data related to the research questions, a summary of the characteristics of respondent instructors is presented here. There are five variables in the biographic information section of the instructors' questionnaire (see Appendix A).

The statistical detail of the biographic profile of the participant instructors is given in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Biographic Profile of Participant Instructors

Variables/characteristics	Response option	Frequency	Percentage
College	Social Sciences & Humanities	35	21.5
	Natural & Computational Sciences	23	13.9
	Business and Economics	31	18.7
	Technology	31	18.7
	Health	26	15.7
	Agriculture	20	12.0
	Total	166	100
Experience in Teaching	Less than a year	38	22.9
	1 – 5 years	83	50.0
	6 – 10 years	27	16.3
	11 – 15 years	8	4.8
	More than 15 years	10	6.0
	Total	166	100
Educational Qualification	Bachelor of Education (BED)	4	2.4
	Bachelor of Art (BA)	7	4.2
	Bachelor of Science (BSC)	40	24.1
	Master of Art (MA)	41	24.7
	Master of Science (MSC)	69	41.6
	Master of Education (MED)	0	0
	Medical Doctor (MD)	0	0
	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	5	3.0
	Total	166	100
Pedagogy courses taken in college or university stay	Yes	51	30.7
	No	115	69.3
	Total	166	100
In-service pedagogical trainings taken	Yes	126	75.9
	No	40	24.1
	Total	166	100

The above table shows the biographic profile/information of participant instructors. From the total of 210 sample instructors, 166 instructors participated in the study and correctly completed and returned the distributed questionnaire. The response rate was 79.04%. The 166 instructors were from six colleges: 35 (21.5%) from the college

of SSH, 23 (13.9%) from NCS, 26 (15.7%) from Health Science and 20 (12%) from Agriculture college. From the college of Business and Economics and Technology, there were 31 (18.7%) participant instructors for each. The participant instructors from all colleges were balanced to some extent.

In relation to their teaching experience, 38 (22.9%) of the instructors have a teaching experience of less than a year. That means they are fresh or inexperienced to the teaching profession. Half of the respondent instructors 83 (50%) have a teaching experience from 1-5 years. The rest 27 (16.3%), 8 (4.8%) and 10 (6%) of the instructors have a teaching experience from 6-10 years, 11-15 years and above 15 years respectively. Most of the instructors 69 (41.6%) and 41 (24.7%) had obtained a Master's degree in Science and Art respectively, and 40 (24.1%) had attained a BSc degree. Only 4 (2.4%), 7 (4.2%) and 5 (3%) have attended their Bachelor of Education, Bachelor Art and Doctorate degree respectively. However, there is no participant having a master of Education and Medical Doctorate degree in the main study.

On the other hand, 51 (30.7%) of the respondent instructors have taken pedagogy courses during their stay in college or universities. That means, they have a pedagogy background. Most of the instructors 115 (69.3%) had not taken pedagogy courses. This implies that their training background is not related to pedagogy. In relation to their in-service pedagogical training, 126 (75.9%) had taken in-service pedagogical training. Only 40 (24.1%) had not taken in-service pedagogical training.

5.2.2 Biographic information of students

In the students' questionnaire (see Appendix B) three variables were included. However, for this study, I considered only one of the three variables: the college in which the participant student belongs to. The remaining two variables (i.e. year of study and department) were not considered in the analysis because they had no

relevance to the research questions. The following table shows student respondents across their college.

Table 5.2 Profile of Participant Students

Variable	Response option	Frequency	Percentage
Participant Colleges	Social Sciences & Humanities	90	16
	Natural & Computational Sciences	99	17.6
	Business and Economics	87	15.5
	Technology	113	20.1
	Health	89	15.8
	Agriculture	84	14.9
	Total	562	100

As is indicated in Table 5.2, out of 600 sample students, a total of 562 students completed and returned the questionnaire. The response rate was 93.67%. The 562 students were from six colleges: 90 (16%) from the colleges of SSH, 99 (17.6%) from NCS, 87 (15.5%) from Business and Economics, 113 (20.1%) from Technology, 89 (15.8%) from Health science and 84 (14.9%) were from the colleges of Agriculture.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR INSTRUCTORS' ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Table 5.3 Descriptive Statistics on Students' Perceptions regarding their Instructors' Assessment Practices across Colleges

Colleges	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SSH	90	137.12	19.010
NCS	99	132.28	20.197
CBE	87	126.57	17.570
Technology	113	117.07	16.087
Health Sciences	89	133.12	19.136
Agriculture	84	139.24	15.278
Total	562	130.29	19.451

Maximum possible score = 195, Minimum possible score = 39

Students' perceptions regarding their instructors' assessment practices across college is indicated in Table 5.3. The mean score values of students' perceptions regarding their instructors' assessment practices of the four colleges, that is, SSH, NCS, Health Science and Agriculture were 137.12, 132.28, 133.12 and 139.24 respectively. It is above the total average mean score (130.29). However, for the other two colleges, that is, CBE and Technology, the mean score values were 126.57 and 117.07 respectively which is less than the total average mean score (130.29). However, to see whether there is significant mean difference or not, one-way ANOVA was conducted and the analysis is shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 One-Way ANOVA for Students' Perceptions regarding their Instructors' Assessment Practices across College

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	32981.990	5	6596.398	20.459	0.000
Within Groups	179269.313	556	322.427		
Total	212251.302	561			

As can be seen in Table 5.4, there is a significant mean difference in students' perceptions regarding their instructors' assessment practices across different colleges. That is, $F_{(5, 556)} = 20.459$, $p < 0.05$. Meanwhile, to see in which group the variation is observed, multiple comparisons were conducted using the Tukey test below.

Table 5.5 Multiple Comparisons showing Variations in Perception between Participant College Students about their Instructors' Assessment Practices

Participant Colleges		Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
I	J		
SSH	NCS	4.839	0.437
	CBE	10.548*	0.002
	Technology	20.051*	0.000
	Health Science	3.999	0.673
	Agriculture	-2.116	0.971
NCS	CBE	5.708	0.259
	Technology	15.212*	0.000
	Health Science	-.841	1.000
	Agriculture	-6.995*	0.096
CBE	Technology	9.504*	0.003
	Health Science	-6.549	0.000
	Agriculture	-12.669*	0.000
Technology	Health Science	-16.053*	0.000
	Agriculture	-22.167*	0.000
Health Science	Agriculture	-6.114	0.222

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

In Table 5.5, the Tukey test indicated that the mean score in perception of students of SSH, NCS, CBE, Health Science and Agriculture are significantly different from Technology students. That is, the result was in favour of SSH, NCS, CBE, Health Science and Agriculture and Health Science students. Furthermore, the mean score in perception of students of Agriculture was significantly different from NCS and CBE. They had a higher mean score. In addition, significant mean difference was observed

between SSH and CBE students perception. The other groups, that is, SSH and Agriculture did not differ significantly from each other. The figure which is indicated below elaborates the mean score of students' perception about their instructors' assessment practices across colleges. The graph is scaled on the bases of the minimum and maximum score of the data. Since the minimum score is 117.07, the graph starts from 115 and continues with an interval of 5.

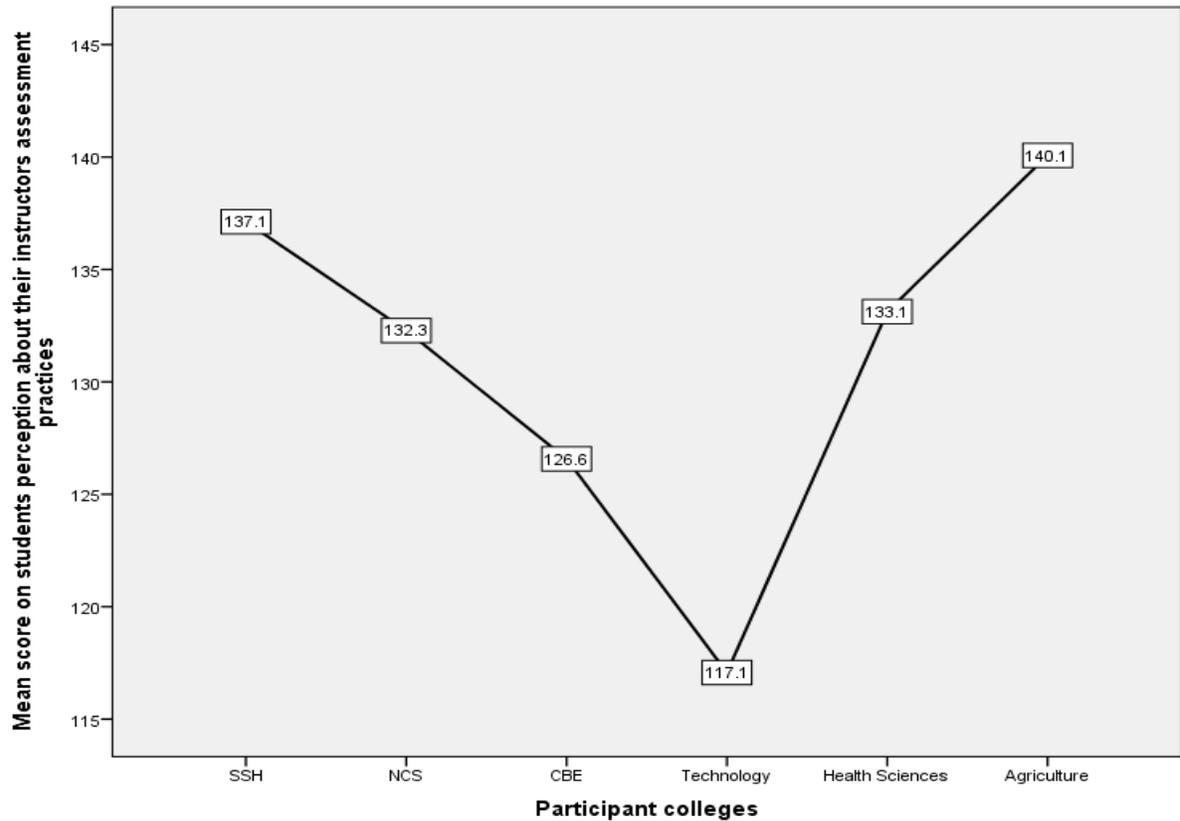


Figure 5.1 Perception of Students about their Instructors' Assessment Practices across Colleges

In addition to the above quantitative information, the students were asked to give response for the following questions using open ended questionnaire. The questions were the following:

- i. When you are assessed by your instructor, did you face any problem? If so, what problem did you face?
- ii. Did the assessment methods that your instructors employ empower you? If so how?
- iii. In general, how do you see your instructor's assessment practices?

For the first question a student from the college of agriculture reacted as follows even if the total perception of students about their instructors' assessment practice is better than other college students:

Some instructors use presentation as an assessment method. But in my view, they did not implement it properly. That means, at the time of presentation some instructors did not give appropriate comment. Instead they discourage us. For example they say, how could you graduate with this performance? Instead of giving positive comment they laugh at the students. [A student from the college of agriculture]

Similarly, a student from the same college responded that:

Some instructors did not see able and unable (low performing) students equally. For example, some instructors give sufficient time for able students and less time for low performing students during presentation. In short, they undermine low performing students instead of supporting and assisting them with tutorial and other mechanisms.

The other college students also share the above idea on the basis of their response for the open ended questions. In general, the following are the major problems that the students face when they are assessed by their instructors:

- Assignment and presentation criteria are unclear and/or unknown.
- In tests/exams, the alternatives for multiple choice questions are long and confusing. When they score, they mark it wrongly.

- The exam papers are not scored based on the correct responses. Instructors give more marks for students who write more pages than who write quality papers with a limited length.
- In tests and exams, some of the items are not complete and they prepare vague/ambiguous questions with additional problems.
- For essay items, some instructors do not read the students' answers. They simply give marks without reading the students' response.
- For written exams and presentations, the instructors give good score for those students who they may know. They do not treat all students equally based on the same criteria.
- The instructions of tests or exams are not clear. Due to this we miss questions that have to be answered easily.
- Mostly there is shortage of time for tests, exams and presentations.
- Most of the time, what we have learned and what we have been assessed is different.
- After the assessments, most instructors do not give feedback to the students.

The above result of the first open ended question which was raised for students is summarised in the following way: From their response one can understand that students face different problems while they are assessed by their instructors. Mostly, instructors did not implement the different assessment principles properly, the evaluation criteria of the different assessment methods are not clear, instructors did not treat students equally, the test or exam items are not developed and scored based on the test construction principles, and instructors did not give appropriate and timely feedback.

For the second question, students responded in three different ways: the first option was "yes, we are empowered through the instructors' assessment methods", the second option was "to some extent, the instructors' assessment methods empower us", and the third option was "no, the assessment practice of instructors doesn't empower us".

Students who responded that they felt empowered through the assessment methods used by instructors gave the following reasons:

- “When difficult test or exam items are given, in order to answer and score better grade, we read more from different sources, and it helps us to improve our knowledge.”
- “In my view, even if most of the assessments are paper and pencil, this empowers me.”
- “During presentation time, I can develop confidence, I can develop the skill of expressing myself in front of the people and I can defend for any question raised from the audience. Moreover, with written works or assignments, I can develop my language and idea organisation skill. Therefore, assessment methods of my instructors empower me.”

In short, the students read more to answer the difficult questions which are included in tests, exams and assignments and these help them to be creative and proficient in their study area. In addition, the presentations and assignments help them to develop their confidence, idea expression and organisation skills, and language proficiency. Therefore, students believed that they are empowered by the assessments of their instructors.

Students who responded by saying that they were empowered “to some extent” through the assessment methods used by instructors gave the following reasons:

- “Sometimes when committed instructors assess our performance or understanding, the assessment methods they employ empower us. On the contrary, the assessment method which is implemented by some instructors does not empower us because some of them have knowledge limitation and lack of commitment.”

- “Partially it is good. But, some instructors prepare questions that are out of the objective of the course. This, then, may invite students to answer the questions by rote memorization which may not empower students.”
- “Some instructors relate their assessment with the real-life situation. In such situation, their assessment method empowers me.”
- “It is difficult to say ‘yes’ with confidence because most of the assessments are theoretical. There is no practical assessment method. With this situation, it is difficult to say the assessment method that instructors’ are using empower students. There is shortage of material and time for practical tasks.”
- “Most instructors use good assessments, but some instructors use on the contrary. It seems that is some instructors seek our failure in tests and exams, for they develop difficult items/questions. They do not need to measure our real performance instead they need our failure.”
- “Instructors do not give chance to the students themselves to assess their own and others work.”

In summary, the assessment methods used by some instructors empower students to some extent. Through their assessment, some instructors empower students and others do not. Because they lack commitment, instructors prepare questions based purely on the objectives of the course, focus only on theoretical assessments, initiate students’ failure by setting very difficult test and assignment questions, and are not open to assessing their colleagues’ work or vice versa.

By contrast, most students from the College of Technology and other colleges said “no, the assessment practice of instructors doesn’t empower us”. For example, one student from the College of Technology explained the reason for his negative perception in the following way:

The assessment practice of instructors doesn’t empower us because the assessment mostly focuses on paper and pencil tests. But for technology students paper and pencil test only does not empower students. In addition, mostly the assessments used are given in group and only one or two able students are involved in the group tasks and the remaining members are

dependent. So how the dependent students could be empowered with such kind of assessment? [Students from College of Technology]

Another student from the college of health science responded in the following way:

In our field of study, everything is case related. Therefore, the assessment should be practical. But what most instructors do is a theoretical assessment. Therefore, how could the theoretical assessment empower students? [A student from College of Health Science]

In general, students from different colleges listed a number of reasons for why they are not empowered with the assessment methods used by their instructors:

- “The students score better grade, but the grade that the students obtain has no relevance for their future knowledge, it is for immediate satisfaction. Because mostly the grade is obtained by theoretical assessments.”
- “Most instructors focus on finishing courses instead of helping students to be knowledgeable.”
- “Most instructors didn’t motivate students to have good knowledge. They simply focus on giving marks and grade.”
- “Mostly the assessment which is used by instructors invites students to develop poor study habit and simply focuses on rote memorization this is because instructors prepare questions directly from text books and handouts and this does not invite students to think critically.”
- “Most instructors didn’t give feedback for each assessment. Therefore with this, how then, their assessments empower students?”
- “Mostly their practice discourages students instead of encouraging. They do not worry about the knowledge and psychology of their students.”

From the above result one can understand that in all colleges of the university, instructors use pencil-and-paper tests and it is theoretical. With pencil-and-paper tests only, students cannot be empowered. Though the students can score good grade, it is for immediate satisfaction, and it has no relevance for their future knowledge because the result is obtained by theoretical assessment and dependency in group tasks.

Moreover, since the questions are directly from text books, the assessments invite students to develop poor study habit. Besides, instructors do not give effective feedback to students for each assessment. Therefore, with these and other problems student cannot be empowered through the current practice of instructors' assessment.

The third question which was raised for the students was general which is related to their overall view of their instructor assessment practices. A student from the college of agriculture responded that, "in my view, the assessment method which is implemented by instructors in our college is very good and encouraging, but they focus only on tests and exams".

Another student from the same college responded as follows:

The assessment practice of most instructors is not good. For example, when group tasks, like assignment, are given based on 1 to 5 grouping, only one or two students do the assignment and the remaining students are dependent on capable students. They simply write their name and identification number (ID) and put their signature on the assignment. But at the end they will obtain the same mark. This is a big problem in the assessment process. Even some of the questions are developed to be answered by rote memorization. And the questions will not invite the students to answer by conceptual understanding. In this way, I have no confidence to say the assessment practice of instructors is good, and it empowers students. [A student from college of agriculture]

In general the view of most students regarding their instructors' assessment practices is summarised in the following way:

- "The assessment practice is not good because most instructors use paper and pencil tests only. They do not take into account practical assessments. The tests and exams encourage only rote learning."
- "The instructors' assessment practices do not help us to achieve our goal. They are simply for marks and grades not for knowledge."

- “Most instructors are not ready to assess each and every student. They simply focus on finishing courses. The different assessment used is simply a matter of formality.”
- “Most instructors do not give appropriate and timely feedback after each assessment.”
- “In group works/assignments the load/burden is for the group leaders only. Others are not ready to involve in the task and they become dependent. But at the end of the assessment the actively involved and dependent students obtained the same mark and this is unfair.”

The overall view of students about the assessment practices of instructors vary from college to college. In all colleges instructors commonly use tests and exams. However, using tests and exams only do not make the students creative and help them to achieve their goal more than getting marks and grades. In addition, instructors use group assignments, but there is dependency in group tasks. The load is for group leaders or able students only. Moreover, instructors during their practice do not give appropriate and timely feedback. It seems as if the problems identified by the participants do not support the students to be creative and proficient in their field of study and it can be assumed that it is difficult to empower students using the assessment strategies that most instructors are currently practicing.

5.4 ANALYSIS OF INSTRUCTORS’ PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Instructors’ perception regarding their own assessment practices is treated with respect to different variables (i.e. perception across different colleges, teaching experience, training backgrounds and educational qualification). In view of this, 40 perception items each having five options (i.e. five point Likert scales) from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) were developed in part three of the instructors’ questionnaire (see Appendix A).

The maximum score was 200 (i.e. $5 \times 40 = 200$ if a respondent strongly agree on all statements) and the minimum score was 40 (i.e. $1 \times 40 = 40$ if a respondent strongly disagree on all statements). In general, the total score/value of respondents lies between the maximum score/value 200 and the minimum score/value 40. In addition, the qualitative analysis using data obtained from instructors and department heads through interview is presented under each section in order to complement the quantitative data.

5.4.1 Perceptions of instructors about their assessment practices per college

Due to different factors like teaching experience, training backgrounds, level of education and others, instructors of different colleges may have different perception about their assessment practices. The following tables show the statistical details of instructors' perception about their assessment practices per college.

Table 5.6 Descriptive Statistics on Instructors' Perceptions regarding their own Assessment Practices per College

Participant colleges	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Science and Humanities (SSH)	35	166.20	12.637
Natural and Computational Science (NCS)	23	162.57	12.905
Business and Economics (BE)	31	157.35	15.068
Technology	31	151.61	20.454
Health Science	26	164.62	12.381
Agriculture	20	163.25	15.944
Total	166	160.72	15.896

Maximum possible score = 200 and Minimum possible score = 40

As is shown in Table 5.6, the mean score value of the perception of the three college instructors, that is, Natural and Computational Science, Agriculture and Health Science about their assessment practices is 162.57, 163.25, and 164.62 respectively.

From these colleges, college of Health Science instructors seem to have better perception than the rest two college instructors (i.e. Agriculture and Natural and Computational Science).

However, the mean score value of the perception of Business and Economics and Technology college instructors is 157.35 and 151.61 respectively which is less than the mean of other four college instructors. Of all the sample colleges, college of social science instructors have more positive perception, the mean score is 162.72. To see whether the difference is significant or not, one-way ANOVA is conducted in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 One-Way ANOVA for Instructors' Perceptions regarding their own Assessment Practices per College

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4574.085	5	914.817	3.943	0.002
Within Groups	37117.608	160	231.985		
Total	41691.693	165			

As can be seen in Table 5.7, there is a significant mean difference in instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices across different colleges. That is, $F_{(5,160)} = 3.943$, $p < 0.05$. To see in which group the variation is observed, multiple comparison was conducted.

Table 5.8 Multiple Comparisons showing Variations in Perception between Participant College Instructors

Participant Colleges		Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
I	J		
SSH	NCS	3.635	0.179
	BE	8.845	0.002
	Technology	14.587*	0.999
	Health Science	1.585	0.983
	Agriculture	2.950	0.949
NCS	BE	5.210	0.815
	Technology	10.952	0.100
	Health Science	-2.050	0.997
	Agriculture	-0.685	1.000
BE	Technology	5.742	0.675
	Health Science	-7.261	0.473
	Agriculture	-5.895	0.757
Technology	Health Science	-13.002*	0.020
	Agriculture	-11.637	0.088
Health Science	Agriculture	1.365	1.000

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

In Table 5.7, it is observed that there is significant mean difference in the perception of instructors from different colleges of the university. However, to see in which group the difference is observed, post-hoc test (multiple comparisons) was conducted as indicated in Table 5.8 above. In this table the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score in perception of SSH and Health Science was significantly different from Technology instructors. That is, the result was in favour of SSH and Health Science instructors. That means the two college instructors have better perception than Technology instructors. The other groups did not differ significantly from each other. The figure which is indicated below gives a clear picture about the mean score of instructors' perception regarding their assessment practices across colleges. The graph is scaled on the bases of the minimum and maximum score of the data. Since the minimum score is 151.6, the graph starts from 150 and continues with an interval of 5.

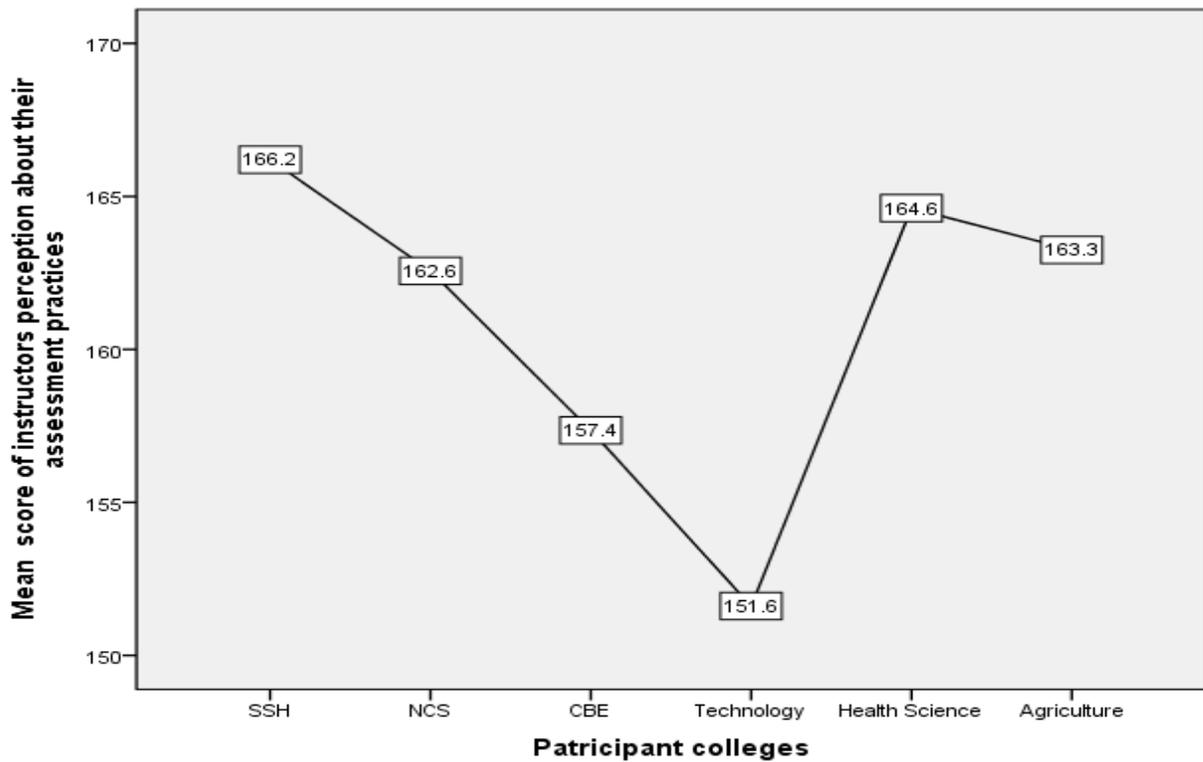


Figure 5.2 Perception of Instructors about their Assessment Practices across College

In addition to the information obtained through questionnaire, data were gathered via semi-structured interviews from department heads and instructors. Based on the above quantitative information, Colleges of Social Science and Health Science instructors seem to have better perception about their practice of assessment than College of Business and Economics and Technology instructors. During their interviews, heads of departments from the College of Social Science and Humanities and Health Science noted that their instructors have better perception about their assessment practices. For example, one of the participating heads of department said the following on the subject:

My department instructors didn't complain when they are asked to use different assessment methods. I think most of them have better perception and they know the way how they learn at the undergraduate level. [Head of PH]

Meanwhile, a department head from the College of Technology noted that:

Instructors in my department “to some extent” perceive positively when they are asked to use different assessment methods. But there are some instructors who insist not to use different assessment methods. These instructors raise different factors. They said that, with shortage of laboratory materials, large class size and other factors, how could we use different assessment methods? [Head of CoTM]

This assures that there is variation in perception regarding the assessment practice of instructors from college to college. One of the reasons for this may be the variation in teaching experience and training backgrounds. Most of the Social Science College instructors have pedagogy background and had taken in-service pedagogical trainings (see Tables 5.9 and 5.10), and this may contribute a lot to their current practice of assessment when it is compared with other college instructors. In addition to Social Science College instructors, the College of Health Science instructors had taken different in-service pedagogical trainings. In relation to this, one of my interviewees from the college of health science noted that:

The assessment practice of instructors’ in our department and college is good. They use multiple assessment methods. The reason may be most instructors took different trainings like effective teaching skill, classroom assessment and different pedagogical trainings which are organized by the university and non-government organizations like International Training and Education Center for Health (I-TECH) and JHPIEGO. Presently, we are ready to send instructors to attend such trainings. Therefore, such trainings help our instructors to use/practice different assessment methods. [Head of PH]

Meanwhile, as is clearly shown in Tables 5.9 and 5.10, College of Technology instructors have no pedagogical background and almost half of them did not undergo in-service pedagogical training during their time at the university. This may limit their abilities to practise assessment.

To see whether there is a difference in the pedagogy background of instructors across colleges, chi-square test was used. The chi-square test (Table 5.9) indicated that there is a significant difference among the different college instructors in relation to the pedagogy courses taken during their stay in colleges/universities. That is, most

of SSH and NCS instructors took pedagogy courses during their stay in colleges/universities. Regarding the in-service pedagogical trainings taken, the chi-square test (Table 5.10) also indicated that significant difference was observed across different college instructors. Except college of technology instructors, most instructors took in-service trainings like higher diploma and other short term trainings.

Table 5.9 Cross-Tabulation between Participant College Instructors and their Pedagogy Background

		Have you taken pedagogy courses during your stay in colleges/universities?		Total	df	χ^2
		Yes	No			
Participant colleges	SSH	26	9	35	5	90.741*
	NCS	18	5	23		
	CBE	7	24	31		
	Technology	0	31	31		
	Health Science	0	26	26		
	Agriculture	0	20	20		
Total		51	115	166		

* $P < 0.05$

Table 5.10 Cross-Tabulation between Participant College Instructors and their In-Service Pedagogical Training

		Have you taken in-service pedagogical training?		Total	df	χ^2
		Yes	No			
Participant colleges	SSH	28	7	35	5	13.884*
	NCS	21	2	23		
	CBE	25	6	31		
	Technology	16	15	31		
	Health Science	20	6	26		
	Agriculture	16	4	20		
Total		126	40	166		

* $P < 0.05$

5.4.2 Perceptions of instructors about their assessment practices across teaching experience

To see the influence of teaching experience on instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices, the table below gives a clear picture.

Table 5.11 Descriptive Statistics on instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment Practices across Teaching Experience

Teaching Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Less than one year	38	156.89	19.131
1 –5 years	83	159.54	14.342
6 -10 years	27	164.11	14.259
11-15 years	8	171.50	14.412
More than 15 years	10	167.20	15.676
Total	166	160.72	15.896

Maximum possible Score = 200 and Minimum possible Score = 40

As can be seen in Table 5.11, the mean values indicated instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices across their teaching experience. The higher the mean value indicates, the better the perception of instructors about their practice of assessment. In the above table, it is clearly observed that, as the teaching experience increases the mean value also increases except the last level (i.e. more than 15 years). To see whether there is significant mean difference among the five levels of teaching experiences, one-way ANOVA was conducted, and the analysis is shown in Table 5.12. In the table, it is indicated that there is no significant mean difference in perception across the five levels of teaching experience. That is, $F_{(4,161)} = 2.384$, $P = 0.054 > 0.05$.

Table 5.12 One-Way ANOVA for Instructors' Perceptions regarding their own Assessment Practices across Teaching Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2331.245	4	528.811	2.384	0.054
Within Groups	39360.448	161	244.475		
Total	41691.693	165			

In the quantitative analysis above, even if there is no significant mean difference across different years of teaching, the mean values of the different level of teaching experience shows variation.

However, different instructors during the interviews responded that teaching experience had a great role in the assessment practice of instructors. For example, one of the participants stated the following regarding the effect of teaching experience on the practice of assessment:

I believe the three variables (that is teaching experience, training background and level of education) affect the assessment practice of instructors. When we see teaching experience, on the bases of experience you have, you may change an assessment that you have used before and use another new method or you may use the previous one by modifying it. So, you will have a chance to modify/revise an assessment method that you are using today and on the next day on another time on the bases of your experience. That means your teaching experience will have a value for your day to day assessment practice. [Instructor B]

Another participant instructor noted that:

From my own experience, training background, teaching experience and level of education affects the assessment practices of instructors. When I start from teaching experience, I start teaching in 2007/08. So, my teaching experience always has been showing an improvement every year. There is a lot of improvement in my teaching and assessment. [Instructor H]

Another instructor from another department explained that:

The instructor's experience is vital for the practice or use of different assessment methods because as the instructor has many years of teaching experience he/she

can understand the behaviour of different students. That means, the instructor knows how a student understands a lesson. Therefore, experience is very crucial in the practice of assessment. [Instructor M]

Another interviewee described the influence of teaching experience on the assessment practice of instructors in the following way:

Yes I believe the three variables affect the assessment practices of instructors. For example, when we take the first one, that is teaching experience, as we get experience, not only assessment but also other tasks can be done on the bases of the information/experience that we gained before. New or inexperienced instructors couldn't properly use different assessment methods. So, as we get experience on different issues we implement it properly. [Instructor ME]

In summary, most of the respondents' perceived that the teaching experience, training background and level of education of instructors had positive contribution for the assessment practice of instructors. That is, as the instructors get more experience in teaching, they can assess their students in a better way than the inexperienced ones.

5.4.3 Perceptions of instructors about their assessment practices across training background

Table 5.13 Descriptive and Inferential Statistics on instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment Practices across Training Background

Variable – Training backgrounds	Have you taken pedagogy courses during your stay (i.e. at the under/post graduate level) in colleges/universities?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-value	Sig.
	Yes	51	162.55	13.470	164	0.989	0.324
	No	115	159.90	16.851			
	Total	166	160.72	15.896			
	Have you taken in-service pedagogical trainings (like higher diploma, short term pedagogical trainings etc.)?						
	Yes	126	162.39	14.458	164	2.441	0.016*
	No	40	155.45	19.015			
	Total	166	160.72	15.896			

Maximum Score = 200 and Minimum Score = 40

* = the mean difference is significant at $p = 0.05$ level

As can be seen in Table 5.13, there is no significant mean difference in perception about their assessment practices between instructors those who have pedagogy and non-pedagogy background. That is, $t_{(164)} = 0.989$; $p > 0.05$. This shows that instructors who took pedagogy courses and who do not take pedagogy courses during their stay in colleges or universities have no significance difference in their perception about their practice of assessment, even if the mean score of instructors who took pedagogy courses ($M = 162.55$) is greater than instructors who do not took pedagogy course ($M = 159.90$) in college/university stay.

However, taking in-service pedagogical trainings brings a significant mean difference in perception about their assessment practices. That is, $t_{(164)} = 2.441$; $p < 0.05$. That means instructors who took in-service pedagogical trainings have a more positive perception than those who do not take in-service pedagogical trainings.

5.4.4 Perception of instructors about their assessment practices across educational level/qualification

Table 5.14 Descriptive Statistics on Perception of Instructors about their Assessment Practices across Educational Qualification

Educational qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bachelor of Education or Art	11	162.27	12.539
Bachelor of Science	40	155.85	20.191
Master of Art	41	161.59	15.093
Master of Science	69	161.93	13.671
Doctor of Philosophy	5	172.40	12.361
Total	166	160.72	15.896

Maximum Score = 200 and Minimum Score = 40

In Table 5.14, the mean of the perception of instructors' assessment practices across their level of education is computed. For the educational level/qualification, there were six levels in the instructors' questionnaire (see appendix A). However, the number of respondent instructors was small for the two levels (i.e. Bachelor of education and Bachelor of Art). Therefore, for the purpose of analysis, the two levels were merged together because they are closely related.

The mean of the perception of instructors across their educational level/qualification is close to each other. That is, for Bachelor of education/art, Bachelor of Science, Masters of art, Master of Science, and Doctor of philosophy the mean values are 162.27, 155.85, 161.85, 161.93, and 172.40 respectively. In Table 5.15, the one-way ANOVA shows that there is no significant mean difference across the levels of educational qualification. That is, $F_{(4,161)} = 1.804$, $P = 0.131 > 0.05$.

Table 5.15 One-Way ANOVA for Instructors' Perceptions regarding their own Assessment Practices across Level of Education

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1788.622	4	447.156	1.804	0.131
Within Groups	39903.071	161	247.845		
Total	41691.693	165			

In addition to the above quantitative information, regarding the influence of training background and level of education on the assessment practices of instructors, those instructors who are interviewed responded in the following way.

For example one of the interviewees noted the following:

The training background of instructors has its own effect in their practice of assessment. If you take pedagogy courses at the undergraduate level, that is great! You may not face difficulty in the application of different assessment methods. In addition, short term in-service training, like Higher Diploma Program (HDP) increases your effort in using and applying different assessment methods. But the education level of instructors that is, having Bachelor Degree or Master's Degree or PhD Degree is not as such determining factor for the instructors' assessment practices. But, it increases the knowledge of the instructor in his/her field of study. [Instructor B]

Another interviewee corroborated the above idea in the following way:

I have taken short term pedagogical skill trainings, so, when I attended the training, my experience in teaching and assessment method was totally changed from the one that I used to do before. For instance, I had not taken pedagogical courses when I was at undergraduate or post graduate levels. But after I have attended different pedagogical skill trainings including HDP, I changed my assessment method totally. I had no any idea regarding the active learning method and the different assessment methods before the training, but now I am using different assessment methods continuously. Regarding level of education, it affects my assessment method. When I compared myself during my first degree and masters, it is totally different. The assessment method, the teaching method and everything is different. Therefore, training and level of education affects the assessment practices of instructors. [Instructor H]

One participating instructor, who has a background of pedagogy, had the following to say about the effect of lack of pedagogical training and level of education in the practice of assessment:

Lack of pedagogical training influences the assessment practice of instructors. Because, if you do not take any pedagogy courses, you can't know how to measure the understanding/achievement of students and you may face problem to use different assessment methods. The education level of instructors also influences the practice of assessment. As the level of students increases, the level of instructors should also increase in the same way. That means, senior students should be taught by instructors having better level of education (like senior lecturers, doctors and professors) than fresh instructors because the courses of senior students may be to some extent advanced. [Instructor P]

The other interviewee said that:

Pedagogical training background will have its own contribution for the practice of instructors' assessment. When I was attending my masters' degree I had taken one pedagogy course. The pedagogy course that I took has its own contribution to my current practice of assessment even if it was not sufficient. In addition to this, in-service short term pedagogical trainings play a great role in my practice of assessment. For example, higher diploma program, Standard Based Management and Recognition (SBMR) and other pedagogical trainings. The level of education is also very crucial. Having Bachelor Degree is not enough to teach at university. You must have Maters Degree or PhD Degree to teach at university. [Instructor M]

Another instructor added that:

I believe that an instructor who has master degree can assess his/her students better than an instructor who has BSC degree because he/she may have better experience and knowledge in the area. [Instructor ME]

In general, the view of most of the interviewees is that, the two variables can affect or determine the assessment practice of instructors in the assessment of students' learning. That is, taking pedagogy courses at the college or university level and taking in-service pedagogical training has positive contribution in their practice of assessment. In addition, participants perceived that the educational qualification of instructors has its own contribution for their practice of assessment.

5.5 THE INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTORS' DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON THEIR PRACTICE OF ASSESSMENT

The three demographic variables (i.e. teaching experience, training backgrounds and level of education) may influence the assessment practice of instructors. Here under the influence of teaching experience, training backgrounds and level of education on the assessment practice of instructors is clearly indicated with the help of descriptive and inferential analysis and tables.

5.5.1 The influence of instructors' teaching experience on their practice of assessment

Table 5.16 Descriptive Statistics on Assessment Practices Instructors across Teaching Experience

Teaching Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Less than one year	38	96.37	11.231
1 – 5 years	83	100.30	10.287
6 -10 years	27	101.96	11.410
11-15 years	8	103.25	8.697
More than 15 years	10	101.50	8.370
Total	166	99.89	10.619

Maximum possible score = 145 and Minimum possible score = 29

In Part Two of the instructors' questionnaire, there are 29 items that intend to see their assessment practices (see Appendix A). The items have five options. The maximum score was 145 (i.e. $5 \times 29 = 145$) and the minimum score was 29 (i.e. $1 \times 29 = 29$). As can be seen in Table 5.16, the mean score of the instructors' assessment practices are indicated. The means are 96.37, 100.30, 101.96, 103.25 and 101.50 for a teaching experience of less than a year, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years and more than 15 years respectively. Except the last level, the mean score values increase as the teaching experience increases. To see whether there is a significant mean difference one-way ANOVA was conducted. The result is shown in Table 5.17.

Even if there is a difference in the mean values, the difference in their assessment practices across teaching experience was not significant. That is, $F_{(4,161)} = 1.641$, $p = 0.173 > 0.05$.

Table 5.17 One-Way ANOVA for the Assessment Practices of Instructors across Teaching Experience

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	717.550	4	179.388	1.614	0.173
Within Groups	17889.275	161	111.114		
Total	18606.825	165			

From the above analysis, one can understand that, even if the assessment practice of instructors' increases with the increase of their years of teaching experience, significant difference is not observed. That is, instructors teaching experience is not a big factor in their practice of assessment.

5.5.2 The influence of instructors' training backgrounds on their practice of assessment

Table 5.18 Descriptive and Inferential Statistics on the Assessment Practices of Instructors across Training Background

Variable – Training Backgrounds	Have you taken pedagogy courses during your stay (i.e. at the under/post graduate level) in colleges/universities?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-value	Sig.
	Yes	51	100.27	11.246	164	0.313	0.754
	No	115	99.71	10.375			
	Total	166	99.89	10.619			
	Have you taken in-service pedagogical trainings (like higher diploma, short term pedagogical training etc.)?						
	Yes	126	100.88	9.845	164	2.167	0.032*
	No	40	96.75	12.376			
Total	166	99.89	10.619				

Maximum possible score = 145 and Minimum possible score = 29

* = the mean difference is significant at $p = 0.05$ level

As can be seen in Table 5.18, there is no significant mean difference in the assessment practices of instructors across training background. That is, $t_{(164)} = 0.313$; $p > 0.05$. This shows that instructors who took pedagogy courses and those who did not take pedagogy courses during their stay in colleges or universities have no significant difference in their practice of assessment, even if the mean score of instructors who took pedagogy courses ($M = 100.27$) is greater than those instructors who do not took pedagogy course ($M = 99.71$) in their college/university stay.

However, taking in-service pedagogical training brings a significant mean difference in their assessment practices. That is, $t_{(164)} = 2.167$; $p < 0.05$. This means that instructors who took in-service pedagogical training practices are more able than those who do not take in-service pedagogical training.

5.5.3 The influence of instructors' level of education on their practice of assessment

Table 5.19 Descriptive Statistics on the Assessment Practices of Instructors across Level of Education

Educational qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bachelor of Education and Art	11	98.55	10.940
Bachelor of Science	40	98.35	10.984
Master of Art	41	99.32	11.972
Master of Science	69	101.07	9.691
Doctor of Philosophy	5	103.40	8.649
Total	166	99.89	10.619

Maximum Score = 145 and Minimum Score = 29

In Table 5.19, the mean of the assessment practices of instructors' across their level of education is computed and it is almost similar. That is, the mean value of Bachelor of education/art, Bachelor of Science, Masters of art, Master of Science, and Doctor of philosophy instructors are 98.55, 98.35, 99.32, 101.07, and 103.40 respectively. To see whether there is significant mean difference between the different levels of education, one way analysis of variance is conducted in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20 One-Way ANOVA for the Assessment Practices of Instructors across Educational Qualification/Level of Education

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	286.282	4	71.571	0.629	0.643
Within Groups	18320.543	161	113.792		
Total	18606.825	165			

As is indicated in Table 5.20, the one-way ANOVA shows that there is no significant mean difference across the levels of educational qualification. That is, $F_{(4,161)} = 0.629$,

$P = 0.643 > 0.05$. However, even if there is no significance difference, the mean values of the assessment practices of instructors increase as their level of education increases.

5.6 ASSESSMENT METHODS PREDOMINANTLY USED BY INSTRUCTORS

In this part commonly used assessment methods by instructors in the selected institution are identified. In Table 5.21, the frequency of instructors' use of the listed assessment methods is indicated.

Table 5.21 Frequency of use of Different Assessment Methods

Assessment method	The degree to which the assessment method is being used										Chi-Square (χ^2) Value
	Always		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Quizzes	30	18.07	67	40.36	57	34.34	10	6.02	2	1.20	97.313*
Mid-semester tests	34	20.48	36	21.67	38	22.89	27	16.27	31	18.67	2.253
Final examinations	116	69.88	30	18.07	9	5.42	11	0.07	0	0	184.795*
Group works/assignments	76	45.78	62	37.35	25	15.06	3	1.81	0	0	81.084*
Presentations	29	17.45	36	21.69	79	47.59	21	12.65	1	0.60	99.663*
Individual assignments	27	16.26	39	23.49	72	43.37	20	12.05	8	4.82	71.892*
Oral questions	53	31.93	28	16.87	32	19.28	36	21.67	17	10.24	20.807*
Research reports	5	3.01	13	7.83	47	71.2	58	34.92	43	25.9	63.807*
Seminars	2	1.20	11	6.63	38	22.89	51	30.72	64	38.55	82.976*
Project works	6	3.61	17	10.24	75	45.18	42	25.30	26	0.16	86.711*
Performance (practical) tests	12	7.77	29	17.47	53	31.93	33	19.88	39	23.49	26.892*
Portfolio assessment	5	3.01	10	6.02	31	18.67	35	21.08	85	51.20	121.723*
Observations	16	9.63	24	14.46	47	28.31	48	28.92	41	24.70	17.723*
Self-assessment	0	0	0	0	15	9.04	70	42.17	81	47.79	45.193*
Peer assessment	0	0	1	0.60	10	6.02	61	36.75	94	56.63	139.012*
Laboratory works	15	9.04	19	11.44	37	22.30	26	15.66	69	41.57	56.651*

*P < 0.05

As indicated Table 5.21, instructors of the selected institution use quizzes (40.36% = frequently), group assignment (45.78% = always and 37.35% = frequently) and final examination (69.8% = always) most of the time. The chi-square test result ($\chi^2=97.313, 81.084, \text{ and } 184.795$ respectively, $P < 0.05$) showed that there is statistically significant difference on the rating pattern of responses. That is the difference was in favour of instructors those who uses quizzes, group assignments and final examination always and frequently.

Presentation (47.59%), individual assignment (43.37%) and project works (45.18%) are used only sometimes. For these items the chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 99.663, 71.892 \text{ and } 86.711$ respectively, $P < 0.05$) showed that there is statistically significant difference on the rating pattern of responses. That is the difference was in favour of those instructors who use presentation, individual assignments and project works sometimes.

However, most instructors never use portfolio (51.20%), self-assessment (47.79%), peer-assessment (56.63%) performance tests (23.49%), seminar (38.55%) and research reports (25.9%). Again for these items the chi-square test result ($\chi^2=121.723, 45.193, 139.012, 26.892 \text{ and } 82.976$ respectively, $P < 0.05$) showed that there is statistically significant difference on the rating pattern of responses. The difference was in favour of those instructors who never use presentation, self-assessment, peer-assessment, seminar and research reports.

In addition, 25.30%, 42.17%, 36.75% and 34.92% of the instructors rarely use project works, self-assessment, peer assessment and research reports respectively. Though there is an attempt to use a variety of assessment methods, still most instructors are very much dependent on the usual written assessment methods, such as quizzes, written group assignments and final exams.

Table 5.22 Assessment Methods used by Instructors in Descending Order of the Mean

S. No.	Assessment methods	Mean
1	Final examinations	4.51
2	Group works/assignments	4.27
3	Quizzes	3.68
4	Presentations	3.43
5	Oral questions	3.39
6	Individual assignments	3.34
7	Mid-semester tests	3.09
8	Performance (practical) tests	2.65
9	Observations	2.61
10	Project works	2.61
11	Laboratory works	2.31
12	Research reports	2.27
13	Seminars	2.01
14	Portfolio assessment	1.89
15	Self-assessment	1.60
16	Peer-assessment	1.51

As is shown in Table 5.22, from top to bottom, the mean values of the assessment methods used decreases. That means, for each of the listed assessment methods, when all instructors use the listed assessment methods, the mean value closes to five. The mean value is close to one, when most of the instructors did not use the listed assessment method. Therefore, most of the times the assessment methods which are listed from number 1 to number 7 are used by the instructors. However, the assessment methods which are listed from number 8 to number 16 are not commonly used by instructors most of the time even if their empowerment value that is, making the students creative and proficient is more than the first seven assessment methods.

In addition to the information obtained through the questionnaire, the interview which was conducted with instructors participants and department heads regarding the most commonly used assessment methods yielded the following results. An instructor who participated in interview responded that “the assessment methods that I have used

commonly are paper and pencil tests, group and individual assignments, and laboratory works” [Instructor B].

Most of the data obtained from the interview is similar to the information which was obtained through the questionnaire. As the other interviewee instructor from another college puts it:

I used group discussion most frequently almost in every class. This is the predominant one. The second one is presentation (individual and group) after discussion. The other one is assignment. Besides these I used tests, quizzes (accidental tests), and final exam. [Instructor H]

Similarly, an instructor from the college of social science and humanities responded as follows:

I use an assessment method which is not less than five or six types. These are presentation, group quiz (I use this method because it is good to support and encourage students with the problem of anxiety and at the same time to bring/develop cooperative learning), individual quizzes, group assignments, and final examination at the end of a course or semester. In addition, attendance is also used as an assessment method. [Instructor P]

In general, instructors from other participant colleges use pencil-and-paper tests (i.e. quizzes, tests and final exam), group assignments and presentations, and oral questions during the class hour. They did not use other methods which help students to be creative and proficient in their study area. The method of assessment is limited to pencil-and-paper tests.

Department heads from different colleges shared the instructors’ ideas as presented above. These participants confirmed that the instructors used quizzes, tests, exams, group assignments (commonly), individual assignments (rarely), and presentation (rarely). For example, one participant from the College of Business and Economics noted that:

My department instructors follow the usual assessment method which is practiced in the university. There is no exceptional focus regarding the use of different

assessment methods. For example, they use quizzes, tests, assignments, final exam etc. They didn't apply other different assessment method which helps students to be creative and proficient. [Head of E]

Another interviewee from another collage added that:

Our department instructors use continuous assessment and terminal assessment based on the direction of the university. But there is a problem in using a variety of assessment methods. It is not as such the expected. Mostly the predominant assessment methods are tests, quizzes, and assignments in group or individual. They also use project and field works based on the nature of the courses and there is also presentation for the project work. At last final exam (terminal assessment) not more than 50% is used. [Head of G]

In general, instructors commonly use written assessment methods. They use quizzes, mid-tests, group assignments and final examinations. In addition, presentation, individual assignments and project works are rarely used. However, instructors never use portfolio, peer and self-assessment and research works. The interview result also indicated that instructors are using limited number of pencil-and-paper assessment methods even if they are required to use continuous assessments by the university. From this one can understand that most instructors are very much dependent upon written (pencil-and-paper) assessment methods. With these assessment methods, it is difficult to make the students creative and proficient.

5.7 PROBLEMS INSTRUCTORS EXPERIENCE REGARDING ASSESSMENT

Table 5.23 Frequency of the Factors Instructors experience regarding Assessment

Factors/problems	Level of agreement										Chi-Square (χ^2) Value
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Large number of students in the class	111	66.87	42	25.30	7	4.22	3	1.81	3	1.81	260.265*
Lack of awareness on different assessment methods	10	6.02	63	37.95	20	12.05	56	33.73	17	10.24	71.771*
Lack of training on the application of different assessment methods	16	9.64	55	33.13	22	13.25	57	34.34	16	9.64	52.976*
Shortage of time	61	36.77	75	45.18	17	10.24	9	5.42	4	2.41	127.133*
High workload	52	31.33	52	31.33	24	14.46	34	20.48	4	2.41	49.542*
Students' low achievement level	49	29.52	58	34.94	26	15.66	26	15.66	7	4.22	49.843*
Insufficient experience in teaching	13	7.83	40	24.10	27	16.27	57	34.34	29	17.47	32.434*
Insufficient resources	54	32.53	74	44.58	13	7.83	21	12.65	4	2.41	105.627*
Negative belief about the use of different assessment	19	11.45	26	15.66	30	18.07	56	33.73	35	21.08	23.699*
Lack of commitment to use different assessment methods	9	5.42	53	31.93	22	13.25	55	33.13	27	16.27	48.699*

*P < 0.05

As can be seen in Table 5.23, large number of students in one class is the major problem instructors' face to use different assessment methods as 66.87% and 25.30% of the respondent instructors strongly agree and agree, respectively. The chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 260.265$, $p < 0.05$) showed that there is statistically significant difference on the rating pattern of responses. That is, majority of instructors strongly agreed and agreed that large number of students in one class is the major challenge that instructors' face in trying to applying different assessment methods.

Lack of awareness and lack of training on different assessment methods are also the problems instructors face as 37.95% and 33.13% of the respondents agreed. However, 33.73% and 34.34% of the respondent instructors disagreed that lack of awareness and training on the application of different assessment methods are considered as a problem. Moreover, shortage of time, high workload, students' low achievement level, and insufficient resources are the major problems instructors experience as 36.77%, 31.33%, 29.52%, and 32.53% of the respondents strongly agreed and 45.18%, 31.33%, 34.94% and 44.58% of the respondents agreed respectively.

The chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 127.133$, 49.542, 49.843 and 105.627 respectively, for each $p < 0.05$) showed that there is statistically significant difference on the rating pattern of responses. The difference was in favour of instructors those who agree and strongly agree on the issue. This means that all these are the major problems that the instructors face in empowering students (i.e. making the students creative and proficient) through different assessment methods.

Table 5.24 Problems Instructors experience regarding Assessment in Descending Order of the Mean

S. No.	Factors/problems	Mean
1	Large number of students in the class	4.54
2	Shortage of time	4.08
3	Insufficient resources	3.92
4	Students' low achievement level	3.70
5	High workload	3.69
6	Lack of training on the application of different assessment methods	2.99
7	Lack of awareness on different assessment methods	2.96
8	Lack of commitment to use different assessment methods	2.77
9	Insufficient experience in teaching	2.70
10	Negative belief about the use of different assessment techniques	2.63

In order to see the problems that instructors experience to use different assessment methods, the mean scores are arranged in descending order as it is clearly indicated in the above table. That is the maximum mean is 5, which means strongly agree and the minimum mean score is 1, which is strongly disagree. Therefore, the mean value of those instructors who choose large number of students in one class as a major problem are 4.62 which is the highest mean score. In addition, shortage of time, insufficient resources, students' low achievement level and high workload are also the problems that affect instructors not to implement the assessment properly. However, the last category of the problems is not considered as a major factor instructor's face to assess students.

In addition to the above quantitative information regarding the problems that instructors face in the assessment of students' learning, the qualitative data obtained through interview from instructors and department heads yields the following information.

Large number of students in one class:

Most of the instructor participants who are interviewed responded that it is the major challenge in the assessment of their students' learning. For example, an instructor from one college had the following to say on the matter:

Large class size is the major problem to evaluate the performance of individual students. For example, if the number of students is more than 40, it is difficult to evaluate students individually because there may be shortage of time to give feedback for each of them. Therefore, the large number of students in one class has its own negative impact in the proper implementation of different assessment methods. [Instructor P]

Another participant from another college added the following comments:

Large number of students in one class is the big problem. In my class, for instance, the average number of students is 65 and above. I planned to use presentation but due to their large number I couldn't do it. It is very difficult to practice or implement. So, what I recommend is the number of students in one class should not be more than 30/40 to the maximum 50. Since, it has its own impact in the quality of assessment one may use in the class. [Instructor ME]

All department heads in different colleges share the above idea. For example, a participant from the college of business and economics supports this argument as follows:

Yes, the basic problem in our college in particular and in the university in general is large number of students in one class. It is very difficult to manage and assess the performance of each and every student. It is very difficult to check whether a student understands a certain lesson or not. The number is above the standard. It is about 60 and 65 student on average in one class. We sought a solution for this problem. We asked the university management body in different meeting, but there is no reasonable response. So, we are living with the problem. [Head of ED]

In general, large number of students in one class is the major challenge that instructors face in order to use different assessment methods. It also creates burden on instructors to give appropriate and timely feedback for each student. Therefore, this may bring negative impact in the quality of education.

Shortage of time:

Having enough time is very important in the assessment of the students' learning. A respondent said that, "if the number of students is large, it is difficult to assess and give timely feedback for every individual student with the given time" [Instructor H].

As one of the participants from the College of Technology said:

One instructor is assigned to teach in four or five classes. Large number of students added, to evaluate each and every student using different assessment methods and give feedback, time limitation is the big factor. [Head of CoTM]

From the above idea one can understand that shortage of time is the problem that instructors experience in the assessment of the students' learning. That is, if there is shortage of time, it is difficult to assess each student and give timely feedback.

High workload:

If an instructor has extra work and over loaded on the same task (i.e. having maximum credit hour), it affects his/her practice of assessment. One of the participants' described this problem as follows: "Due to the workload, I couldn't give frequent and immediate feedback to my students" [Instructor H].

Another participant instructor added that, "due to large number of students in one class and workload on instructors, it is difficult to effectively evaluate each student" [Instructor B].

Insufficient resources:

An instructor responded that

There is shortage of equipment to show practical issues and to support the theoretical concept. In addition, the classrooms are not clean and there are

broken chairs in the room. The chairs are not sufficient and the students waste their time in pulling the chairs here and there. [Instructor H]

Another instructor from another college said that “[shortages] of material like paper is a problem in our department” [Instructor M]. There is also shortage of organised laboratory equipment. Therefore, this limits the instructors from making the students creative and efficient. In relation to this, one of my interviewee noted that “[the] shortage of laboratory materials limits instructors not to use different assessment methods” [Head of CoTM].

Students' low achievement level:

As most instructors explained weak academic background of students is a means to achieve low grades/results and this creates a big problem in the assessment of students' learning. As one of my participant puts it:

The assessment method that you plan to use may not match with the level of students because most of the students have weak academic background. [Instructor P]

Another participant illustrates the above idea as follows:

Weak academic background of students influences my practice of assessment. Most of the students joined different colleges and departments not on the bases of their interest. When we see most students who are in my department (i.e. Biology) they joined it to escape from the challenging courses like mathematics, physics and chemistry as biology department has no advanced mathematical courses relatively the limited language skill of the students is another problem. For example, you may write a question in a good way but the students may not understand it easily and they may not write anything on the answer sheet or the space provided. [Instructor B]

As a result of their weak academic background, students those are academically weak depend on capable students as most instructors responded. An instructor had the following to say:

Dependency in group assignments is the main problem in my current practice of assessment. That means the assignment is done by one or two students only. The other members of the group contribute nothing in the group task. They simply write their name and ID number and put their signature on it. So,

with this problem it is very difficult to make the students creative and proficient. [Instructor P]

Lack of training and awareness on the application of different assessment methods:

As most of the participants responded, instructor's lack of pedagogical training and awareness on the use of different assessment methods is the problem in the assessment of students' learning. In relation to this, one of my participants' noted that, "since our department instructors have no pedagogical background, they face problem in the use of different assessment methods" [Head of CoTM].

Lack of commitment and negative beliefs about the use of different assessment methods:

If there is lack of commitment from the side of instructors to use different assessment methods properly and from the side of the students to be assessed with different assessment methods, it is difficult to make them creative and proficient. An instructor reflected as follows:

There is a problem of commitment from both parties: from instructors and from students. Students are not interested to do assignments or group tasks effectively. They want to get good mark and pass exams easily. Instructors in their part, assess students with tests and exams only. But using one or two assessment methods does not show the students real performance. [Instructor PH]

Another participant stating that:

There is lack of commitment to do assignments from the students' side. From my observation, most students do not do assignments to acquire knowledge. They simply copy someone else's work and run for marks and grades. In my view, in addition to lack of commitment the reason may be their weak academic background. [Instructor ME]

Regarding lack of commitment, head of a department from the Technology College noted that:

Some instructors do not give feedback for students at all even if the students' number in one class is large. In think this is their carelessness. Even in the exam room, they do not invigilate students properly; instead they open way for cheating. If an instructor do not show the students result on time, he/she cannot be ready for the next. [Head of CoTM]

In addition to the above problems, instructors raised the following issues during their interview. One of the participant instructors described that:

The major problem that the instructors face is the system more focuses on the students to get better grade or pass mark rather than knowledge. In short, the system makes the students grade-oriented. Therefore, the system creates a big problem in the assessment practice of instructors. In addition, immediate bosses (like department heads and college deans) and top management bodies (like university presidents/vice presidents) influence indirectly instructors in the assignment of grades. Here the system does not target the objective and knowledge of the students they have. It more focuses on marks and grades the students earn. In my view there should be a system which focuses on the knowledge that the students gain instead of grade. [Instructor B]

Another interviewee also added the following comment:

When you evaluate the students, they complain about the marks and grades they earn, particularly in assignments. They think that in assignments they can get full mark if they write something. They always complain on the value they are obtaining. They don't mind about their knowledge rather than focusing on the mark they are obtaining. This is the major problem that I am facing by now. [Instructor H]

In short, instructors and students lack commitment and have negative beliefs about the use of different assessment methods. Instructors are not committed to assess students with different assessment methods and give timely feedback even if their number in one class is large. Moreover, instructors do not invigilate students properly and do not show their result on time which is an indication of lack of commitment. In addition to this, the students are not interested to be assessed by different assessment methods simply they need to get marks and pass in an easy way.

Most of the participants responded that cheating is the major problem in their department. For example, one of the participants' revealed the following:

Cheating is a factor which affects the assessment of students' learning. That means, if a student obtains good score by cheating, the result that the student obtains does not reflect his/her real performance. [Instructor P]

On the other hand, in some departments, cheating is not taken as a major problem. An instructor from a department responded that:

To reduce the problem of cheating we invigilate one class students by splitting in to two classes. The invigilators use special setting arrangement and the instructor uses code when test items are prepared. [Instructor PH]

In general, the quantitative and qualitative analysis indicated that large number of students in one class, shortage of time due to their large number, high workload, students low achievement level, and insufficient resources are the major problems that most instructors experience in the assessment of students' learning. In addition, lack of awareness and training on the application of different assessment methods and lack of commitment and negative beliefs about the use of different assessment methods are also problems that instructors experience in order to assess the students properly and make them creative and proficient in their area of study.

5.8 STUDENT EMPOWERMENT AND INSTRUCTORS ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The qualitative data obtained using interview from the instructors and department heads yield the following information regarding the mechanisms used in enhancing the empowerment of students through the instructors' assessment practices. One of the participant instructors puts it as follows:

When we assess students with different assessment techniques effectively, we can make them creative and proficient. In my view the main aim of the assessment that we are using is to check to what extent the students achieve the objective of a course. So, if your assessment is on the basis of the students' skill and knowledge, there is a tendency to empower them. [Instructor B]

In relation to this, another participant instructor noted as follows:

I try to use different item format in one test/exam paper like multiple choice, true-false and others because it helps to see the skill of students in different way. So, if you include different item formats you can favour most of the students and you can reach most of them. Besides this, I tried to include individual assignments, for the students get good mark. To some extent, I use peer assessment in group presentations. [Instructor H]

Furthermore, another participant mentioned the following aspect:

I couldn't believe all in all the current assessment practice of instructors empower students. But when we assess students properly with different assessment mechanisms and when we give [a] tutorial class for those students who scored below the average and for those who face difficulty in understanding a certain lesson, there is a tendency to empower them. To do this, the course load of instructors should be reduced or minimised. Otherwise, it is very difficult to give tutorial classes and assess each student's performance. [Instructor M]

In summary, in order to empower students, instructors use different assessment methods. However, the assessment methods they are implementing are more of traditional such as pencil-and-paper tests. However, they try to include different item formats in a single test or exam to see the different skills of students. In addition, they use group assignments and presentations. In general, even if they use different traditional assessment methods, they believe that their current practices not enough to empower students in their learning.

In addition to the above idea, regarding empowering students through instructors' assessment practices, the various heads of department who were interviewed responded in the following way. For example, one of my interviewees noted the following:

We try to empower students with different assessment mechanisms. For example, we use individual presentation and paper and pencil tests. When I say individual presentation, in the site/hospital the students are required to present on the side of the patient (bed side presentation). The other empowerment mechanism is by giving appropriate and timely feedback for every assessment. In addition, to some extent some instructors use peer assessment. And there are some instructors those who award actively participating students. I think this is another empowerment mechanism. [Head of PH]

Different interviewees noted that with pencil-and-paper tests only it is difficult to make the students creative and proficient. In short it is difficult to empower students. For example, an interviewee reported the following:

The assessment that we are using focuses more on paper and pencil tests which is difficult to empower students with. We do not use peer and self-assessments. These two assessment methods are not implemented in our department. [Head of G]

Another interviewee described this situation as follows:

To some extent, the assessment method which is implemented by instructors empowers students. But with paper and pencil tests only, it is difficult to empower students. Instructors in our department do not use self and peer assessment because, there may be lack of awareness on how to properly use it and the students may be biased while they assess and give mark for their colleagues' performance. That is, they may give good mark for students who perform poorly and vice versa. [Head of PS]

The above idea is the view of heads of department regarding the empowerment of students' through instructors' assessment practices. They explained that instructors do not use different alternative assessment methods like peer and self-assessment. They only focus on pencil-and-paper tests. To some extent, they try to use group and individual presentations and assignments. However, there is a gap in giving appropriate and timely feedback. Therefore, the empowerment of students through instructors' assessment practice is not very encouraging as to the responses of heads of departments.

5.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the major finding of the study. The results which are presented are on the bases of the research questions.

The quantitative analysis confirmed that differences are observed in students' perceptions regarding the assessment practices of their instructors across different colleges. The difference was in favour of social science and humanities, health science and agriculture students. The qualitative information assures that

students face different problems in the assessment process and the assessment practices of their instructors do not make them creative and proficient.

To determine instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices per colleges, teaching experience, training background and educational qualification, different statistical analysis were conducted. Therefore, the result shows that statistically significant differences in perception are observed across colleges and in-service pedagogical trainings. In the other variables, that is teaching experience and educational qualification, differences are observed but not significant.

The influence of instructors' demographic variables such as their teaching experience, training backgrounds and educational qualification were also investigated on their practice of assessment. The result indicated that instructors' in-service pedagogical training brought a significant difference in influencing their practice positively. In the other variables, statistically significant differences were not observed even if there are variations in their means.

Regarding the commonly used assessment methods, most instructors are very much dependent on written (pencil-and-paper) assessment methods. However, with these assessment methods, it is difficult to make the students creative and proficient in their study area. Moreover, instructors experience different problems while trying to use variety assessment methods. Finally, using the current assessment practice of instructors, empowering students, that is making creative and proficient in their study area is unthinkable. To make the students creative, the instructors have to use different alternative assessment methods.

Lastly, discussion of the research results is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has attempted to investigate the following question: How do instructors' empower students with their assessment practices at a university in Ethiopia?

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the main findings of the results presented in the analysis section in order to answer the research questions of this study. A detailed discussion for the relevant findings will be given with the support of previous findings from other studies, whenever applicable. The first research question was about reviewing the existing scientific literature regarding tertiary assessment. This research question was already considered in Chapters Two and Three, whereas the remaining research questions will be addressed now.

6.2 STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR INSTRUCTORS' ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

A study performed by Stryven, Dochy and Janssens (2005:325) revealed that students' perceptions about assessment significantly influences their approaches to learning and studying. This means that the students' perception about the assessment methods used by instructors plays a significant role. In this regard, in this study, I developed perception items to see students' perceptions regarding their instructors' assessment practices at the higher-education level.

In the analysis section, comparison of students' perceptions about their instructors' assessment practices was made across different colleges of the university. As the result of the descriptive statistics (Table 5.3) indicates, students of the four colleges (i.e. SSH, NCS, Health Science and Agriculture) have a higher mean score in perception than the remaining college students about the assessment practice of their instructors. The mean score of students' perceptions regarding the

assessment practice of instructors of the rest two colleges that is, Business and Economics and Technology was less than the total averages mean score.

The result of one way-ANOVA (Table 5.4) shows that there is a significant mean difference in students' perceptions regarding the assessment practice of their instructors across different colleges. The multiple comparison using Tukey HSD test indicates that significant mean difference in perception of students about their instructors assessment practices was observed between SSH and CBE, SSH and Technology, NCS and Technology, CBE and Technology, Agriculture and NCS, Agriculture and CBE, Agriculture and Technology, Health Science and Technology. College of Technology students has lower perception about the assessment practice of their instructors. The findings of a study by Mussawy (2009:55) showed that the students' perceptions of assessment differ significantly across the three departments (Social science, Natural science and Language) and the difference was in favour of social science and language departments.

The above idea is complemented by qualitative information obtained through open-ended questions. Students' responses indicate that they face various problems while they are assessed by their instructors; this may be one cause of their negative perceptions of their instructors' assessment practices. For example, a student said that:

Instructors do not use presentation properly as an assessment method and do not give appropriate comment, instead they discourage us and they do not treat able and unable students equally. They also undermine low performing students instead of supporting them with tutorial and other mechanisms. [A student from the college of agriculture]

According to Ashcroft and Rayner (2004:5), students in Ethiopian higher education institutions frequently report that assessment is perceived as unfair. In addition to the above problems, students face problems in pencil-and-paper tests or exams. The test or exam items are not prepared on the bases of the test construction principles. There are problems in preparation, scoring, fairness and feedback. For example, in preparation of test/exam items, instructors use long and complex

alternatives for multiple choice items, the idea of some items are incomplete and there are vague questions, even the instructions lack clarity. Due to this, the students miss questions that can be answered easily. The test items also lack content validity, because the students responded “what we learn and what comes as a test is different”. In addition to this, there are problems in scoring test/exam items and other assessment like assignments. For example, some instructors do not score the test/exam items on the bases of the correct response, but if a student writes more pages whether it is correct or incorrect and have good hand writing, he/she will get good mark.

Moreover, some instructors simply give marks without reading the students' response and give good mark for the students who they know. In short there are problems of fairness, as Ashcroft and Rayner noted in their study report (*ibid*). The other one is that instructors do not give timely feedback for students after each assessment. In general, all the above problems in tests or exams and in other assessment methods limit the students not to be creative and proficient. In relation to this, Ashcroft and Rayner (2004:5) remark that students have noted variations in standards of lecturers' examinations and marks across departments.

Regarding empowerment through assessment, students responded in different ways. The assessment methods, like pencil-and-paper tests, presentation and group work/assignments are commonly used by their instructors (see also Table 5.21). Some students perceived that they are empowered through the aforementioned assessment methods. They perceived that, in pencil-and-paper tests, when difficult items are included and in order to answer the difficult items and score good grade, students read more from different sources even if there is shortage of resources. Presentations help students to develop confidence and skill of expressing their idea in front of audience. Group work/assignment also helps them to develop their language skill, idea organisation and socialisation skills. Therefore, students believed that with these and other assessment methods, instructors empower students. Oermann and Gaberson (2009:229-230) strengthen the above idea that written assignments can improve their problem-solving and higher level thinking skills, gain experience in formulation their ideas and

communicating them in a clear and coherent way to others and develop writing skills.

Other students perceived that, “to some extent,” they are empowered through the assessment practice of their instructors. That means, when committed instructors assess the students’ performance or understanding of a course through different assessment methods, the students may become motivated and can think critically. Some other instructors relate their assessment with the real-life situation. In such cases the assessment which is implemented by instructors empowers students. On the other hand some students perceived that there are careless instructors who have knowledge limitation of the subject matter and assessment methodology. There are also instructors who prepare questions out of the objective of the course and most of their questions will be answered by simply rote memorisation. In addition, most of their assessments are theoretical and instructors seek the failure of their students by developing very difficult questions. Students also perceived that their instructors do not give chance to the students to assess their own and other students’ works. Instructors also agreed on the students’ idea. Therefore, all these factors do not empower the students. That means they do not help the students to be creative, motivated and proficient.

There are also students who perceived that they are not all in all empowered with the assessment practice of their instructors. Most of the students who perceived negatively about the assessment practices of their instructors are from the College of Technology. The quantitative result also shows that College of Technology students has lower perception about their instructors’ assessment practices than the other college students in the university. The reason may be that instructors of College of Technology use mostly pencil-and-paper tests. However, for College of Technology students and others, using only paper and tests do not make them creative. Other assessment methods like group assignments are done by one or two students and the remaining group members become dependent. As a result of this, as the students asked: “how [can] dependent students be empowered”? In addition, most instructors in different colleges use theoretical assessments. However, theoretical assessment does not only empower students. That means to

make the students creative and proficient there should also be practical assessment. As to the findings of Ashcroft and Rayner (2004:5), examinations are generally theoretical and so practical skills and knowledge are not adequately assessed.

In general, the view of the majority of students about their instructors' assessment practice is summarised in the following way: Through their instructors' assessment, most students scored better grades. However, the grade that the students obtained does not reflect their real performance and they think that it has no contribution for their future knowledge because the grades are mostly obtained by means of theoretical assessments. Instructors also focus on finishing courses and giving marks and grades instead of motivating and helping students to be knowledgeable. Students also mentioned that the assessments which are used by instructors invite students to develop poor study habits and simply focus on rote memorisation. They also prepare questions directly from text books and handouts which does not invite students to think critically. Instructors also do not give appropriate and timely feedback for each assessment. As to the finding of Ashcroft and Rayner (2004:5), students often receive no feedback on the quality of their work and feel that they have insufficient opportunities for redress if they feel that marking has been unfair.

6.3 INSTRUCTORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

In the empowerment of students, instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices play an important role. If the instructors do not have good perception about the assessment methods they are practicing, they cannot make the students creative and proficient. In relation to this, MacLellan (2004:20) notes that, in higher education institutions, academics' conceptions of assessment may affect their assessment practices. Susuwele-Banda's (2005:129) study in schools also shows that teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment had influence on their classroom assessment practices. In this study, the perception of instructors in higher education institutions about their assessment practices is treated with

respect to different variables (i.e. perception across different colleges, teaching experience, training backgrounds and educational qualification).

The result of this study indicated a significant mean difference in instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices across different colleges. The result was in favour of social science and humanities and health science colleges. That means social science and humanities and health science college instructors seem to have better perception than other college (for example, technology and business and economics) instructors regarding their practice of assessment. The interview result which was obtained from department heads and instructors from different college also showed that these two college instructors have better perception about their practice of assessment. The reason may be that most of social science instructors have pedagogical background (that means instructors of this college took pedagogy courses at the under graduate level in their university or college stay). In addition, they took in-service pedagogical training. Health science instructors also took in-service training and other pedagogical training like effective teaching skill, which are given by different organisations (like I-TECH and JAPIGO), according to one of my interviewees. Here, one can understand that knowledge of pedagogy/training is a factor that determines instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices (see Section 5.4.3). In relation to the variations of instructors assessment practices across colleges, White and Liccardi (2006:7) draw some distinctions between the disciplines (hard–soft and pure–applied) the assessment methods favoured. They described instructors from hard-pure disciplines (natural sciences) preferring assessment which featured specific and focused exam questions as well as objective tests where the emphasis was on the 'quantitative nature' of knowledge.

Instructors from the hard-applied disciplines (engineering) they described as favouring assessment methods which also focused on exams but specifically where the questions were about problem-solving. Instructors from soft-pure disciplines (the social sciences and the humanities) tended to prefer essays and short answer questions and oral presentations. They were also more likely to design continuous assessment rather than the end of course assessment typified

by traditional exams. Finally, instructors who were from a soft-applied discipline (health science) also favoured essays.

The effect of teaching experience and educational qualification on the perception of the assessment practice of instructors is also treated (in Section 5.4.2 and 5.4.4). In the first variables (teaching experience) even if significant mean difference was not observed, the higher mean value is associated with higher experience in teaching except the last level (i.e. more than 15 years). In the second one, the educational qualification of instructors also affects their perception about their assessment practices even if significant difference was not observed. That means, instructors those are PhD holders have higher mean score in perception than others. This indicated that educational qualification has its own impact in instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices.

6.4 THE INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTORS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE, TRAINING BACKGROUNDS AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION ON THEIR PRACTICE OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an important element of the teaching and learning process. The assessment practices implemented in an educational institution directly affect the quality of education in that institution. However, lack of adequate staff in qualification, pedagogical trainings and experience is the challenge that the newly emerging higher education institutions face (Desta, 2004:79). According to the Kebede, Lestrade, Teshome, and Tikele (2011:49) report, the majority of university instructors are young, inexperienced and lack training in pedagogy. The result of the present study showed that there is a slight variation in the assessment practice of instructors across the three variables that is teaching experience, training background and level of education of instructors. Regarding the first one, that is teaching experience, the descriptive statistics (mean values) indicated that the assessment practice of instructors varies across different years of teaching experiences.

The higher the mean value indicates the better practice of assessment. That is, the mean value increases as the teaching experience increases except the last level (i.e. a teaching experience of 15 years and above) (see Table 5.16). However, the one-way ANOVA indicated that significant mean difference was not observed in the assessment practice of instructors across teaching experience. On the other hand the finding of Chan (2007:49) in a school situation shows that relationship between teachers teaching experience and their practices of using multiple assessments shows statistically significant difference. That is, Chan tested and found that the practice of teachers having a teaching experience of 3-5 years and 6-10 years is better than teachers having a teaching experience of less than two years and more than 11 years (*ibid.*). Norton, Norton & Sadler (2012:6) have also found that lecturers become more student-learning focused as they get more experience. From the present study one can understand that teaching experience has its own impact on the assessment practice of instructors even if significant mean difference was not observed.

The assessment practice of instructors across training background was also treated (see Table 5.18). In this regard, there was no significant mean difference in their practice of assessment across training background. This shows that instructors who took pedagogy courses and who did not take these courses during their stay in college or universities have, to some extent, similar practice of assessment even if the mean score of pedagogy group (mean = 100.27) is greater than non-pedagogy group (mean = 99.71) by fraction. However, taking in-service pedagogical training brings a significant mean difference in their practice of assessment). That means instructors who took in-service pedagogical training practice assessment in a better way than instructors those who do not take in-service pedagogical training. From this, one can understand that training background of instructors, whether it is in-service or pre-service, has its own impact on their assessment practices. In relation to this, Nega (2001:2) notes that, in addition to the knowledge of the subject matter every instructor must be equipped with pedagogical skills, which of paramount significance in the teaching and learning process. Zewdie (2001:12) also adds that instructors may have knowledge of the subject matter in higher education but teaching and assessment

are more than knowledge of the subject matter. Teaching needs special educational skill and awareness about students. In the international context, Cheng *et al.* (2008:25) in their study found out that there is a relationship between instructors' own teaching experiences and educational training and their choice and development of their assessment methods. That is younger instructors have less training in the area of assessment and evaluation.

An interview response which was conducted with instructors and department heads assures that the different pedagogical training (pre-service and in-service) contribute a lot for their current practice of assessment. In relation to this, Desta (2004:75) agrees that the more the instructor has obtained trainings on assessment, the more he/she would practice in the classroom. Desta also argues that trained instructors have high probability to implement assessment than untrained ones. In general, training instructors to keep up-to-date with recent development in education is one of the major important aspects to be taken in to consideration (*ibid.*). Iqbal *et al.* (2009:56) supports this idea, asserting that university teachers may not be fully aware of the learning potential of the different alternative assessment techniques or may have concerns to use these techniques in their classroom. For both cases professional development of university teachers may be suggested to ensure better assessment practices in university classrooms. To evaluate and assess students critically with different assessment techniques, training is vital and it makes the students creative, proficient and competent, because as to Ion and Cano (2011:176) study finding lack of academics' training may limit the development of assessment by competency. That is it would be impossible to adopt this methods of assessment without prior training.

Finally, the educational qualification/level of instructors has its own impact on their practice of assessment. Based on the result of the present study, PhD holders have higher assessment practice mean score than masters and bachelor degree holders (see Table 5.14). However, the analysis of variance shows that there is no significant mean difference in the practice of their assessment. Even if there is no significant difference, the mean values of the assessment practice of instructors increases as their level of education increases. The interview result also supports

that aforementioned result in that having a bachelor or master or PhD degree has its own impact on his practice of assessment. This is consistent with the findings of Oladele (2011:66) that the more years of teaching experience and the higher the educational level, the more the use of authentic assessment.

6.5 PREDOMINANTLY USED ASSESSMENT METHODS

According to Chan (2007:38), no single assessment is able to thoroughly cover the learning progress or achievement of students. Brookhart and Nitko (2008: 36) add that using multiple assessments gives students many opportunities to show what they know.

However, instructors of the selected institution are not using a variety of assessment methods and depend highly on pencil-and-paper tests; that is, final exams, quizzes and mid-semester tests. In addition to the pencil-and-paper tests, they use group assignments, individual assignments and presentations to some extent. However, using pencil-and-paper assessment methods is not enough to see the competency and performance of a student because of the weakness these traditional assessment methods. For example, Luyegu (2009: 40) notes that test scores cannot tell about the academic development of learners. Similarly, they cannot tell what a particular difficulty the students had during a test. From the descriptive data, on average, out of a maximum score of five and a minimum score of one, instructors use final examination (mean = 4.51), quizzes (mean = 3.68), mid-semester tests (mean = 3.09) and group assignments (mean = 4.27). The mean values in the bracket are almost close to 3, 4 and 5. That means instructors use the listed assessment methods sometimes, frequently and always respectively. This indicates that most of the instructors are very much dependent on the usual written/traditional assessment methods. In terms of percentage, 40.36% and 69.80% of the instructors use, quizzes and final exams frequently and always respectively as an assessment method (see Table 5.21 and 5.22). The interview result also assures that, most instructors use pencil-and-paper tests and group assignments. Pencil-and-paper tests are traditional assessments (Dikli, 2003:13; Luyegu, 2009:40; Dogan, 2011:420; Alquraan, 2012:125). Frank and

Barzilai (2004:44) also remark that traditional assessment in most courses of the higher education is mainly based on pencil-and-paper tests. Even if the traditional forms of assessment are time and cost effective and the measurement is consistent, they have been criticised for promoting a surface approach to learning, for emphasising outcomes that will not serve the student beyond the classroom, for being poor predictors of future performance and for poor content sampling discouraging students (Luyegu, 2009:41). In addition, it is less appropriate for measuring the understanding of students in problem based learning (Frank & Barzilai, 2004:44) and discourages deep learning (Alquraan, 2012:131).

On the other hand, Dogan (2011:418) notes that, in order to enhance the empowerment of students, alternative assessment methods are used to assess the knowledge and skills of students that are not well captured by traditional assessment methods. Alternative assessment may include peer assessment, debates, observation, group work, student self-assessment, project or seminar works and presentations, portfolios, the use of technology in the assessment process, or the assessment of multiple drafts of written work or projects (Dikli, 2003:14; Dogan, 2011:420-421; Casebeer & Alquraan, 2011:25).

However, the result of the present study indicated that alternative assessments are not effectively used by instructors in the selected institution. On average, out of a maximum score of five and a minimum score of one, instructors use peer assessment (mean = 1.51), self-assessment (mean = 1.60), portfolio (mean = 1.89), seminar (mean = 2.01), research reports (mean = 2.27), laboratory works (mean = 2.31), projects (mean = 2.61), observation (mean = 2.61) and practical tests (mean = 2.65) (see Table 5.22). The mean values in the bracket are almost close to 1 and 2. That means instructors never and rarely use the listed assessment methods respectively. According to Chalichisa (2009:371), portfolios, peer and self-assessment, simulation, and other innovation assessment methods were introduced in higher education institutions but, this time, instructors could not implement them. The information obtained through interviews supports this claim. Most instructors never use peer and self-assessments and other alternative assessment methods. Sambell, McDowell and Brown study (1997, in Watty,

Jackson & Yu, 2010:222), also show that students were often not in favour of traditional assessment which they considered did not encourage understanding. In contrast many students believed that alternative assessments promote quality learning.

In general, pencil-and-paper tests/traditional assessment methods are the predominant assessment methods. Specifically final exams, quizzes and mid-semester tests are used predominantly from the traditional assessment methods and from the alternative assessment methods like group assignments, individual assignments, presentation and oral question are used commonly. The other alternative assessment methods, for example, self-assessment, peer assessment, portfolio, seminars, project works and others are not commonly used by instructors in the selected institution (see Table 5.22). However, if the instructors use different alternative assessment methods there is a tendency to enhance empowerment of students in the learning. According to Dogan (2011:418), the general purposes of alternative assessment are to motivate students to do their best work, build self-confidence and self-concept of students, show improvement in students' work over time, and show the best work of students in a specific area. For these purposes, using different assessment methods particularly alternative assessment is crucial in higher education institutions.

6.6 PROBLEMS INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS EXPERIENCE REGARDING ASSESSMENT

In the proper assessment of students' learning, there are different factors that instructors and students face. Below are detail discussions of the problems that instructors and students face in the assessment process.

6.6.1 Problems instructors experience regarding assessment

To properly assess and empower students, instructors are influenced by different factors. Knowing the factors or problems is important in order to find possible solutions. Duncan and Noonan (2007:3) note that it is important to know how

instructors' assessment strategies and grading practices are influenced by the type of classroom learning conditions like class size, instructors training, teaching experience and others. In the present study, the factors that limit instructors in assessment of students' learning are related to the instructors themselves, the students, facilities/resources and others. A study by Chan (2007:52) at school level identified different areas contributing to the non-use of multiple assessment methods. This study tried to identify the factors which negatively affect the enhancement of student empowerment through instructors' assessment at the selected higher education institution. The result of the quantitative data showed that large number of students in one class, shortage of time, insufficient resources, students low achievement level and high workload on instructors are the major problems that instructors face in assessment of students' learning (see Table 5.23 and 5.24). Below is the detailed discussion of the problems that the instructors face in the assessment of students' learning.

Large number of students in one class

Large class size is the major challenge in the assessment of students' learning as it is presented by most respondent instructors. From the total of 166 respondent instructors, 111 (66.87%) and 42 (25.30%) of the instructors strongly agreed and agreed that large number of students in one class is the major challenge in the assessment of students' learning. This finding is consistent with the findings of Niikondo's (2011:37) study, which shows large class size is the first problem that negatively affects assessments.

That is, if the number of students in a certain class is high, it is difficult to assess all students performance with a variety of assessment techniques and difficult to give appropriate feedback based on the assessment result for each student. The qualitative data obtained through interview also assures that large class size is the major challenge in the assessment of students' learning. Interviewees' responses revealed that large numbers in each class make it difficult to evaluate the performance of individual students and they are unable to give timely feedback. Therefore, the instructors are forced to use limited traditional assessment

methods. Messineo *et al.* (2007:126) support the above finding. According to them, the sheer number of students in overcrowded classes limits the instructor's ability to implement discussion, timely feedback, and active problem solving.

Jones (2006) and Finn, Gerber and Boyd-Zaharias (2003, in Masole & Howie, 2013:217) argue that, for effective instructional delivery and high achievement, class size should not exceed 25 students. However, in most Ethiopian universities, the number of students in one class is unmanageable. The majority of interviewees noted that "currently the average number of students in one class is 60 and above". So how can an instructor manage and assess this much students? According to Adula (2008:68), in order to apply active learning in teaching, the number of students in a given class should be reasonable so that instructors could be able to assess individual students, use multiple assessment techniques, give feedback to students on time and give equal chance to all students. In general, large number of students in one class has its own impact in the quality of the assessment that the instructors are applying.

Shortage of time and heavy instructor workload

These two elements negatively affect the assessment practices of instructors. As most instructors strongly agreed (36.77% and 31.33%) and agreed (45.18% and 31.33%), shortage of time and heavy instructor workload respectively are the major challenges in the assessment of students' learning. This finding is consistent with the research findings of Norton *et al.* (2012:3), which suggest that lecturers feel that one of the barriers to good assessment and feedback practice is time limitation and workload. Moreover, lack of time due to workload prevents the lecturer from giving good quality feedback (*ibid: 17*). The information which is obtained through interview also indicated that shortage of time and heavy instructor workload limits them not to properly assess the students' learning. The majority of the interviewees said that "if the number of students in one class is very large, it is difficult to assess and give timely feedback for every individual student within the given time".

Similarly, if an instructor has extra workload and is overloaded by the same task, it affects his/her practice of assessment. An interviewee explains that, “due to workload I have, I couldn’t give frequent and immediate feedback to my students”. In relation to this, Girma (2010:110) has found that workload is an obstacle to improved implementation of active learning and assessment. From this one can understand that number of students in one class, the time available and the workload are interconnected. In addition, Oladele’s (2011:66) study found that, as lecturers hold more administrative positions, the use of authentic assessments decreased.

Insufficient resources

For effective teaching, learning and assessment, the availability of resources is vital. As most respondent instructors 54(32.53%) and 74(44.58%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively, shortage of resources is the other challenge that instructors face in the assessment of students’ learning. On the bases of interview data the following are the challenges that most instructors face in relation to resources not to assess their students’ learning properly. These are shortage of relevant reference materials for library works and home based activities, shortage/inaccessibility of chemicals and instruments for laboratory courses, lack of educational facilities like copier, printer and shortage of computer lab. Even the chairs in the classroom are not sufficient and the students waste their time in pulling the chairs here and there. In relation to this finding, the Nekatibeb (2010: 127) study shows that inadequacy of learning materials such as duplicating paper, photo copy machine, computer and the like constitute the most affecting factor for teaching and assessment in higher instructions. Girma (2010:110) has also found that shortages of equipment and resources is repeatedly presented as an obstacle in the teaching and learning process in higher education institutions.

Lack of commitment and negative beliefs about the use of different assessment methods

Instructors' lack of commitment to assessing students' learning with different assessment methods and their negative beliefs about alternative assessment methods are obstacles to making students creative and efficient in their study areas. The quality of learning can be adversely affected when beliefs about assessment are particularly negative.

The result of the present qualitative analysis using chi-square (χ^2) test shows that instructors have positive belief about the use of different assessment methods ($\chi^2 = 23.699, p < 0.05$). Even if there is significant different in the rating pattern of responses, some instructors, that is 19 (11.45%) and 26 (15.66%), strongly agreed and agreed respectively as they have negative beliefs about the use of different assessment methods. Similarly, chi-square (χ^2) test shows that instructors are committed to use different assessment methods ($\chi^2 = 48.699, p < 0.05$). Even if there is significant different in the rating pattern of responses, some instructors that is 9(5.42%) and 53(31.93%) strongly agreed and agreed as they are not committed to use different assessment methods. From these one can construe that there are problems in commitment and negative beliefs about using different assessment methods. Samuelowicz and Bain (2002:198) strengthen the above idea that the particular beliefs held by university teachers and students about assessment have a significant impact on teaching and learning practices.

The information which is obtained using interview also indicated that there are problems of commitment from both parties (instructors and students). That is, heads of department mentioned that some instructors do not give feedback for students. This indicates that they had no commitment. In addition, in the exam room they could not invigilate students properly; instead they open way for cheating and they do not show their result on time. Therefore, this is an obstacle for the students to be ready for the next task.

As students described in the open-ended questions, there is lack of commitment on some of their instructors while they assess their student's performance. Instructors use only one or a maximum of two traditional assessment methods. However, using limited number of assessment methods does not make the students creative.

Students low achievement level

This is the other problem that most instructors experience in their assessment of students' learning. According to Nega (2012:216), many students join Ethiopian universities without adequate academic background. If students have low achievement level or weak academic background, they may not be actively engaged in the assessment tasks. The result of the present study shows, low achievement level of students is the major problem as 49 (29.52%) and 58 (34.94%) of the instructors strongly agreed and agreed respectively.

As most of the instructor interviewees explained, weak academic background is a means to achieve low in their current result. Mostly, academically weak students depend on capable students in group assignments and in any group tasks. As the interviewees described group assignments are done by one or two students only, the other members of the group contribute nothing in the group task. They simply write their name and identification (ID) number and put their signature on the assignment. Therefore, with this problem it is difficult to make the students creative and proficient in their study area.

In a study performed by Spiller (2012:2), when the students are ordered to do different assessment tasks by their instructors, they have no confidence to do the given task independently. The UTDC Guideline (2004:17) also supports the above idea, stating that one group member may sometimes take the responsibility of doing the bulk of the work, which means the other members are dependent on him/her.

Other problems that instructors face

The above problems are not the only problems that instructors face in the assessment of students' learning. Problems in the system itself, interference from immediate bosses (heads of department and college deans) and management bodies (university presidents and vice presidents), students' grade orientedness, cheating and others are the challenges that the instructors face in the assessment of students' learning.

The university education system focuses more on letting the students get pass marks. The main focus of the university is reducing the attrition rate by giving a pass mark to the students. As one of my interviewee put it, 'the one and the major problem that the instructors face is the system that enforces more on students to get better grade rather than knowledge'. That means there is interference from the management bodies. At this time the instructors are required to use pencil-and-paper tests rather than using different alternative assessment, which makes the students creative and proficient. Therefore, the system creates big problem in the assessment practice of instructors. This finding of Nega (2012:145) study supports this in the following way. Students complain a lot about marking and grading, and professors feel they are being asked to be relaxed in grading of students, instead of working hard to pass, they take it up to higher authorities to give instructions to the instructors to give them a passing grade.

According to Nega (*ibid.*), professors perceived the excessive intervention of the central university administration with issues of student assessment and grading as a threat to their academic freedom in particular and quality of education in general. In addition, the students focus more on obtaining passing mark and grade only rather than knowledge and they complain about the marks and grades they are obtaining, particularly in assignments and subjective test items. In short more of the students are grade oriented.

The other major problem that the instructors face in the assessment of students' learning is cheating. According to one of my interviewees, if a student obtains

good score by cheating, the result that the student obtained does not reflect his/her real performance.

All the above problems influence the instructors negatively in making the students creative and proficient through their assessment practices. These findings show that instructors' assessment practices at the university is affected by a multitude of complex problems. One may imagine how these problems in the assessment practices affect quality of student learning in the university.

6.6.2 Problems students experience regarding assessment

In the assessment process, students may face different problems. The problems are related to the students themselves, their instructors and other factors.

Dependency in group tasks

Using group work for the assessment of students' performance is challenging because usually most members of the group do not participate actively to complete the given task effectively. Only one or two students do the group task and the other members become dependent as to the students response. They simply write their name, identification (ID) number and put their signature on the completed task document. According the UTDC Guideline (2004:5), one group member takes on the responsibility of doing the bulk of the work, but the result which is given at the end for all members of the group is the same. How, then, dependent students could be empowered through this form of assessment? This is the main challenge that most able students face while they are assessed through group assignments.

Lack of involvement and motivation

In the present study, in group tasks and other activities, students are mostly dependent. There is lack of involvement. Student involvement in the assessment process has a significant contribution in the empowerment process. According to

Falchikov (2005:151), the more the students are involved, the greater potential of assessment to improve the students' learning and encourage personal, academic, and professional development.

Fear and lack of self-confidence

Most students described fear in class presentations is the main challenge for them. They face problems while they are assessed through presentation. Instructors during their interview assured that students are not confident enough to present the given task in front of their classmates and their instructor. There is shyness. If the students do not express their idea in front of their classmates, how could they express and communicate with the other external community after graduation. In this case, the empowerment of students becomes in question through such kind of assessment.

Problems related to feedback

It is clear that feedback is integral to the learning process and is one of the main benefits that students get from assessment. However, in the present study on the bases of the students' response, most instructors did not give appropriate and timely feedback in the assessment process. As to Nicol's (2010:515) findings, feedback helps students to monitor their own work as well as to regulate their learning. Instructors give assignments and order the students to present in the class to their classmates and instructor. However, after they score the assignment paper and the students present the given task, instructors do not give oral or written feedback regarding their work but the students know the raw score at the end. They do not know where their mistake is. Instructors during their interview noted that large number of students in one class does not create opportunity to give effective feedback. They also remarked that students are not interested in feedback comments and are only concerned in the mark.

Problems related to the Instructors

The assessment practice of instructors in different colleges is not appropriate as some students mentioned in the open ended questions. As to the students explanation, in tests or exams and other assessment methods there are problems. Students' responses indicate that the numbers of alternatives given in tests or exams are long and confusing. There are incomplete and confusing or debatable items, the instruction is unclear, minimal time is given to respond, and there is misalignment between what the students have learned and the test or exam items. In addition, there is biasness in scoring. That is, some instructors give good score for essay or short answer items for those students who write more or have good hand writing and for those students who may know whether the students response is correct or not. Moreover, for essay or calculation items, some instructors give scores without looking at the students' response even the test and assignment papers.

The other problem that the students face is that some instructors plan to finish courses and simply give marks and grades instead of helping the students to be knowledgeable. In their response, they do not motivate students to have good knowledge. Mostly their assessment practice invites students to develop poor study habit and simply focus on rote memorisation. Therefore, with these problems, how could the instructors' assessment practice empower students?

6.7 STUDENTS' EMPOWERMENT AND INSTRUCTORS' ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

In the present study, instructors' do not use different alternative assessment methods to empower students. They use traditional assessment methods such as pencil-and-paper tests. However, with pencil-and-paper tests only, it is difficult to empower students. That is, it is difficult to make them creative and proficient. Students revealed that instructors did not give them opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers. However, Leach *et al.* (2001:294) note that empowerment in the assessment context encourages learners to take direct

action, both individually and in groups, to assess their own work, to criticise the assessment regime and that of the academic world, and to negotiate practices different from those that are proposed.

Particularly, instructors of different colleges use pencil-and-paper tests, there is dependency in group tasks/assignments and there is a theoretical assessment for practical courses. Therefore, with these assessment mechanisms, empowering students is unthinkable. How could the dependent students and students those who are assessed theoretically for practical subjects be empowered? According to a range of literature on the subject, the recommended assessment methods for empowering students in their learning are peer and self-assessment because these methods have been found to enhance learning outcomes, with positive results including improved thinking processes, in addition to helping students to improve their learning approaches (Ljungman & Charlotte, 2008:289).

On the analysis Section 5.6, from the different assessment methods, most instructors rarely and never use self and peer assessment methods. Heads of departments during their interview indicated that instructors in their department do not use self and peer-assessment because there is lack of awareness on how to properly use it and the students are biased while they assess and give mark for their colleagues' performance. Self and peer assessments, in addition to their empowerment value, they can be used for large class sizes (Nulty, 2011:495). In the selected institution, as many of the respondents described in the questionnaire and interview, class size was the major problem. Hence, using peer and self-assessment for large class size is appropriate. Peer and self-assessment methods are crucial –not only to accommodate large class sizes but also to facilitate autonomous learning (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007:30).

In the process of student empowerment through different assessment mechanisms the contribution of instructors is great even if there are variations from instructor to instructor due to their experience in teaching, training backgrounds, level of education and other factors. Most instructors commonly use pencil-and-paper tests, group assignments and presentation. These assessment

methods may have their own contribution to make the students creative and proficient if properly used. However, if the instructors use other different alternative assessment methods, they can increase the creativity and proficiency of students in their field of study. This requires the instructors' commitment. In relation to this, Leach *et al.* (2001:293) note that one of the contributions of instructors to empower students in the assessment process is their encouragement. The support given to students during the teaching, learning and assessment process is vital to empower students. However, in the present study, the support which is given from instructors to their students is not as such attractive because there are instructors those who discourage and undermine students in the assessment process.

6.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter the discussion of the results of the present study with the support of previous finding from other studies were presented. The discussion focuses on the research questions which are raised in Chapter One. That is, it focuses on students' perceptions regarding their instructors' assessment practices, instructors' perception about their practice of assessment, the influence of instructors' demographic variables on their practice, the predominantly used assessment methods by instructors, the problems that instructors experience regarding assessment and finally the mechanisms of students' empowerment through instructors' assessment practices were discussed. The next chapter will provide summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I presented the discussion of the results of my study by relating them to the existing literature. In Chapter Seven, I offer a summary, conclusions and recommendations in relation to the research questions as outlined in Chapter 1. I begin this chapter by summarising the overall study, including the major findings related to the research questions, and thereafter draw conclusions and offer recommendations. Finally, the limitations of the study are highlighted and concluding remarks made.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

In the introduction to Chapter 1(Section 1.1), I gave a short overview regarding assessment and instructors' empowerment of students through different assessment methods. In Section 1.2, the background of the study was illustrated and the rationale for the research was addressed in Section 1.3. In Section 1.4, the problem statement was formulated and the main research question was given as: How do instructors' empower students with their assessment practices at a university in Ethiopia?

Section 1.5 investigated how instructors' assessment practices at a university in Ethiopia influence/enhance student empowerment. Important terms were then presented and explained in Section 1.6. In order to address the research problem, the study followed a mixed-method research approach (Section 1.7.1). Finally, the demarcation of the research was presented (Section 1.8) and the division of the chapter was given (Section 1.9).

In Chapter Two, a review of related existing literature, focused on the assessment practices of instructors in the teaching and learning process to enhance the empowerment of students, was unpacked. The philosophical foundation and psychological theories of learning and assessment were presented in Section 2.3. Specifically, the primary theoretical framework that supported the study was constructivist theory, although two other theories (behaviourist and cognitive theory) also made contributions (Section 2.4).

In addition to this, different issues related to assessment – such as the meaning of assessment in tertiary education (Section 2.2), purpose of assessment (Section 2.5), the different assessment methods used in tertiary education (Section 2.6), considerations with regard to quality assessment practices (Section 2.7), assessment practices of instructors at tertiary level (Section 2.8), instructors' perceptions regarding their assessment own practices (Section 2.9), and students' perceptions regarding instructors' assessment practices (Section 2.11) – were reviewed in detail. In addition to this, the problems that instructors and students experience (Section 2.10 and 2.13) and the influence of instructors' demographic variables on their assessment practices (Section 2.11.1-2.11.3) were discussed. Finally, the strategies of student empowerment through instructors' assessment practices were presented in Section 2.14.

In Chapter Three, the educational developments and the assessment system in Ethiopian higher education institutions was presented. Specifically, a brief introduction about Ethiopia (Section 3.1) and the structure of the formal education system in Ethiopia (Section 3.2) were presented. Moreover, an overview of Ethiopian higher education and its assessment system, including the Ethiopian higher education proclamation, were presented in Sections 3.3 and 3.4. Finally, in Section 3.5, a summary of the chapter was presented.

In Chapter Four, the research design was discussed in detail (Section 4.2). It was revealed that a mixed-method research design – specifically, a convergent parallel mixed-method design – was used. The study was conducted at Debre Markos University in Ethiopia (Section 4.3). Instructors and students from the six colleges

of the university were selected as the participants of the study. The methods of data collection were questionnaires and interviews (Section 4.5.1). Two versions of the questionnaire were prepared and completed by instructors and students and two corresponding versions of the interview guide were prepared for selected instructors and heads of department (Section 4.5.1) From the total of 5944 students and 450 instructors, 600 students and 210 instructors were selected, via probability sampling techniques, to complete the questionnaires. Six department heads and six instructors were chosen, via non-probability sampling techniques, for the interviews (Section 4.3). The descriptions of variables that are used in the quantitative part the study were presented in Section 4.4. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics and the qualitative data were analysed using themes and word descriptions (Section 4.5.2). The validity and reliability of the data were ensured via a pilot study (Section 4.5.3), and trustworthiness (Section 4.5.4) and the ethical considerations (Section 4.6) were also discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter Five, the data were analysed and presented. The analysis was performed and presented in different subsections in consideration of the research questions raised in Chapter One. In Section 5.2, the analyses of instructors' and students' demographic variables were presented. Students' perceptions regarding their instructors' assessment practices (Section 5.3) and instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices (Section 5.4) were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, with results presented in tables and figures. The influence of instructors' demographic variables (i.e. teaching experience, training background, and level of education) on their assessment practice was presented in Section 5.5. Assessment methods commonly used by instructors (Section 5.6), problems experienced by instructors regarding assessment (Section 5.7), and, finally, the mechanisms of student empowerment through instructor assessment practices (Section 5.8) were analysed and presented.

In Chapter Six, the findings of the results presented in the analysis section were discussed. The discussion was given with the support of previous findings from other studies. In Sections 6.2 and 6.3, students' perceptions regarding their

instructors' assessment practices and instructors' perceptions regarding their own assessment practices were discussed with reference to existing supporting literature. The influence of instructors' demographic variables on their assessment practices was discussed in Section 6.4. The predominantly used assessment methods (Section 6.5) and the problems that instructors and students face in the assessment process (Section 6.6) were discussed in detail. Finally, in Section 6.7, the mechanisms of student empowerment through instructor assessment practices were discussed. This final section offers a brief conclusion in respect of the main findings in the literature and empirical investigation regarding the empowerment of students through the assessment practices of their instructors.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on the empowerment of students through the assessment practice of their instructors. The following conclusions can be drawn from the literature and the empirical research.

7.3.1 Conclusions from the literature

The following main conclusions from the literature are identified:

The literature reviewed confirms that assessment is a key element of the teaching and learning process in higher education, in particular, and in all education systems. The assessment practices implemented by instructors in higher education institutions directly affect the quality of education in those institutions. Because the main objective of the education and training policy is to develop the cognitive, creative and productive potential of students, the assessment practice of instructors is vital. From different sources, it is observed that assessment is a serious issue in the area of teaching and learning. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Brink and Lautenbach (2011:503) identify assessment as one of the cornerstones of education. Assessment in tertiary education is an ongoing evaluation process aimed at understanding and improving student learning by measuring the learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs. Studies indicate that,

in order to improve the quality of education, it is critical to improve assessment systems (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2012:41). Alquraan (2012:125) emphasises that, since well-developed assessment methods have a more positive impact on students' achievement, higher education institutions are constantly encouraged to use and utilise effective assessment methods that enhance the learning process. In practice, according to Chan (2007:38), no single assessment is able to thoroughly cover the learning progress or precisely measure the achievement of students (Section 2.2).

The literature consulted also confirms that empowerment, in this context, is the development of knowledge, skills and abilities in the learner to enable him or her to control and develop his or her learning. In this regard, empowering students via different assessment methods plays a significant role in the quality of the results they achieve.

In the view of various theories, specifically within constructivist learning environments, assessment is not a separate examination at the end of the course; rather, assessment methods are integrated into the learning process itself. Traditional examinations often lead students to adopt a surface approach to learning and studying, and to attempt to memorise the material instead of trying to understand it. Therefore, theorists of this opinion argue, assessment should be collaborative, continual and embedded in real-world tasks. The students should be actively engaged with at every stage of the assessment process in order that they truly understand the requirements of the process as well the criteria and standards being applied, which should enable them to produce better work (Section 2.4).

Effective assessment provides detailed, useful information for instructors, learners and other stakeholders. Assessment works best when its purpose is clear and when it is carefully designed to fit that purpose. There are three main purposes of assessment: assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning. Assessment for and as learning occur while students are engaged in the process of learning, while assessment of learning occurs at the end of a learning process, task or unit of work, or for reporting purposes at the end of a time period,

such as a semester. The three main purposes of assessment are complementary and all three together are very powerful in improving student learning. Therefore, in the assessment of students' learning, an instructor in tertiary education has to be informed about the three purposes of assessment. Currently, instructors predominantly use traditional assessment methods, such as pencil-and-paper tests; to make the students creative and proficient, instructors have to use multiple assessment (alternative) methods because doing so gives students many opportunities to show what they know. The different assessment methods should possess the desired qualities like validity, reliability, fairness and objectivity. That is, if the assessment techniques lack these qualities, they become meaningless. The assessment practices of instructors are invaluable in their ability to assist students to be fruitful and to have knowledge and understanding in their areas of study (Sections 2.5 – 2.8).

Literature shows that, in higher education institutions, instructors' perceptions of assessment influenced their assessment practices. In relation to this, students have noted variations in the standards of instructors' assessment practices across departments. Students have also reported that they perceive their instructors' assessment methods as unfair. If the instructors practice assessment properly, students' perceptions about their instructors' assessment practices will improve (Sections 2.9 and 2.12).

From different sources, it is observed that problems are experienced in the attempted empowerment of students through assessment. The problems that are presented in Sections 2.10.1 through 2.10.8 are experienced by instructors. There are also problems that are experienced by students (Sections 2.13.1 to 2.13.5). All the problems listed limit the students' abilities to be creative and proficient in their study areas.

Finally, peer assessment, self-assessment and instructors' contributions in the process of student empowerment also play major roles in this regard. Student empowerment is possible only through active involvement in their learning in addition to the instructors' commitment to the task. The assessment practice

implemented in an educational institution directly affects the quality of education in that institution (section 2.14).

7.3.2 Conclusions from the empirical investigation

On the basis of the findings of empirical investigation, the following conclusions are drawn.

This study revealed that students' perceptions regarding the assessment practices of their instructors, and the perceptions of instructors about their own assessment practices differ significantly across the various colleges. Particularly, students in the Colleges of Technology, and Business and Economics perceive their instructors' assessment practices less favourably than those in the other colleges. Similarly, the instructors' perception of their own assessment practice is considerably less favourable in these two colleges than in the others. These more negative perceptions clearly indicate a problem in the practice.

In this study, where instructors' teaching experience, training backgrounds, and levels of education differed, corresponding differences were observed in instructors' assessment practices. This means that these three variables influence the assessment practice of instructors. In order to empower students, these instructors tried to use quizzes, tests, exams, group assignments and, to some extent, presentation. However, students stated that their instructors were not using a variety of assessment methods and depended solely on the usual pencil-and-paper tests. On their own, such traditional assessment methods are not sufficient to enhance the empowerment of the students' learning ability. Therefore, the use of various alternative assessment methods is crucial to enabling students to be more creative, proficient and productive in their study areas.

In the assessment of students' learning, instructors face different problems, such as large student numbers per class, insufficient time to assess so many students individually, insufficient resources, and, consequently, very large workloads. At the same time, instructors' failed to provide appropriate and timely feedback to students, undermined students instead of supporting them, practised biased

scoring, lacked awareness of and training on the application of different assessment methods, lacked commitment, and held negative beliefs about the use of different assessment methods. Meanwhile, students' low achievement levels, overdependence, and lack of involvement in or commitment to do the given tasks properly also affected the quality of their learning assessments. In general, all of these problems hindered the creativity and proficiency of students in their learning because the quality of assessment was directly linked to the different quality-related aspects of education, like manageable class sizes, adequate resources, relevant and sufficient instructor training, adequate and appropriate instructor experience, and satisfactory instructor education levels.

Ultimately, evidence of student empowerment through instructors' assessment practice in the selected institution was not encouraging because they said assessment practices were overly traditional and theoretical. Using only these assessment methods, instructors cannot help their students to become more creative and proficient because no clear indication of their different skills or abilities can be obtained by these means.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to rectify the situation and facilitate the empowerment of students through assessment practices:

- To achieve the objective of the education and training policy –that is, to develop creative, proficient individuals with problem-solving skills and the ability to fit in to the real world of work – it is of critical importance to give immediate and extensive attention to instructors' assessment practices, as they are implemented within the university.
- An effort should be made to properly train all instructors – in particular, those who have not taken/ are not taking pedagogy-related courses primarily instructors from College of Technology, Business and Economics and Natural and Computational Sciences.

- Effective pedagogical training should be given to all graduate assistants who are found in the different colleges of the university before they are assigned to positions as instructors in higher education institutions and before they engage directly in the task of teaching. This is because knowledge of pedagogical science no less valuable than knowledge of subject matter.
- Instructors should be committed to using various assessment methods, which help students to be creative, effective and knowledgeable.
- The assessment practices that are implemented in higher education institutions should be in line with the real world of work; that is, they should consider real-life situations and it should be practical and appropriate feedback should be give for every assessment.
- Instructors or other concerned bodies should be aware of and inform students about the benefit of being assessed via multiple assessment methods and should advise students to perform the given tasks with commitment.
- The students should be actively involved in and allowed to contribute to group tasks to gain improved knowledge from and share their good practices with their peers.
- With regard to the problems posed by obstacles such as large classes and inadequate resources, the university and the Ministry of Education should seek immediate solutions.
- Regarding students' weak existing academic backgrounds, the Ministry of Education and other concerned bodies should make concerted efforts to improve the quality of education in the lower levels of the system – that is, elementary, secondary and preparatory school.
- Further research, covering more government and privately owned universities, should be conducted to substantiate the findings of the current study and strengthen its contribution towards the development of sound research data.

7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In all research, there are limitations that must be acknowledged when results are considered. The primary limitation of this study was that it focused on only a small area (i.e. a single Ethiopian university). Additional research over a wider demographic area may enhance insights and enable greater generalisation regarding the assessment practices in all Ethiopian universities.

7.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Assessment is a central element in the overall quality of teaching and learning in higher education, in particular, and the entire education system. Empowering students with different assessment methods helps them to become motivated, work hard, and strive for better performance. Therefore, the assessment practice of instructors has its own valuable contribution to make to the quality of students' learning. In relation to this, students with more favourable perceptions regarding the different assessment methods are likely to become more creative and proficient. This is why it is important that students perceive their instructors' assessment practices in a more positive light. In the present study, however, variations in perception were observed across different colleges of the university, College of Technology students and instructors held particularly negative perceptions regarding the practice of assessment. In terms of the influence of instructors' various demographic variables (i.e. teaching experience, training background, and level of education) on their assessment practices, differences were observed, although these were not necessarily significant. Therefore, in the teaching, learning and assessment process, the teaching experience, background and qualification of instructors should be given due attention.

In the assessment of students' learning, instructors mostly used traditional assessment methods such as pencil-and-paper tests, making it difficult for students to become creative and proficient in their fields of study. In relation to this, most instructors offered different explanations for why they failed to use a variety of alternative assessment methods. Some of their reasons included

excessively high student numbers per class, time shortages, students' poor academic foundations, and insufficient resources. Therefore, to enhance the empowerment of students, these problems should be dealt with so that the instructors are able to use various alternative assessment methods. In addition, the students should be more committed, independent and actively involved in the assessment process. If this is achieved, the students will become creative and proficient participants in the real world of work.

Therefore, this study contributes to a large body of literature that acknowledges the contribution of effective assessment in empowerment of students in a more effective and educationally responsive manner.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Instructors Questionnaire

University of South Africa
College of Education
Ethiopian Regional Centre

Dear instructors,

My name is Abatihun Alehegn and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education, University of South Africa (UNISA). This questionnaire is designed to gather information for the research entitled “Student empowerment through instructors’ assessment practices at a University in Ethiopia”. And you are kindly requested to fill the questionnaire as genuinely as possible. In the questionnaire, items on your practices of assessment, your view (perception) regarding assessment practices at the university, the assessment methods used, the problems you experience in implementing different assessment methods to students empowerment will be treated.

Your response to the items (of the questionnaire) will remain confidential, and the results will be used to examine the existing practices of assessment system in the university. I hope you will be able to take time and carefully complete this questionnaire. I greatly appreciate your participation in this research. The questionnaire will take approximately 20–30 minutes to complete.

Please, use a **tick “√” mark** to indicate your responses for items with alternative responses and briefly state your responses for the open-ended items, and return the completed questionnaire within five days to me or to the head of your department.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

The Researcher

Part I: Biographic Information

1. **College:** _____
2. **Experience in teaching**

Less than one year <input type="checkbox"/>	11 – 15years <input type="checkbox"/>
1 – 5years <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 15 years <input type="checkbox"/>
6 – 10years <input type="checkbox"/>	
3. **Education Level/Educational Qualification**

Bachelor of Education (BEd) <input type="checkbox"/>	Master of Science (MSc) <input type="checkbox"/>
Bachelor of Art (BA) <input type="checkbox"/>	Master of Education (MEd) <input type="checkbox"/>
Bachelor of Science (BSc) <input type="checkbox"/>	Medical Doctor (MD) <input type="checkbox"/>
Master of Art (MA) <input type="checkbox"/>	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) <input type="checkbox"/>
4. **Have you taken pedagogy courses during your stay in colleges or universities?**
 Yes No
5. **Have you taken in-service pedagogical trainings (like higher diploma program, short term pedagogical trainings)?** Yes No

Part II: Items on Assessment Practices

Instruction: The following table contains lists of items which are related to the assessment practice of instructors in higher institutions. Please put **tick (√) mark** under the number corresponding to the statement which describes your actual practice of assessment by selecting the alternative scales given bellow.

5 = always 4 = frequently 3 = sometimes 2 = rarely 1 = Never

No.	Statement	Scale				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	In my practice, I use formative assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	In my practice, I use summative assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Key: Formative assessment – an assessment given before, during and after the teaching learning process. Example – assessment using oral questions, class work, discussion, presentation etc.

Summative assessments – an assessment given at the middle or end of a course/module. Example – assessment using final examination, completed term papers, completed projects etc.

3	In my practice, I use more formative assessment than summative assessments.					
4	I use different assessment methods continuously.					
5	I use table of specification to prepare test/exam items.					
6	I develop quizzes, tests and exam items based on the rules of test construction .					
7	In my practice, I use more alternative assessment than traditional tests (paper-and-pencil tests).					
8	Before delivering a course, I describe the mode of assessment to be used to students.					
9	I tell my students in advance when they will be assessed.					
10	I integrate (align) the assessment that I use with the teaching methods and objectives of the course.					
11	I integrate formative assessment as part of my teaching activities.					
12	I use oral questions as an assessment method during the instructional process.					
13	I involve students in the assessment process.					
14	When assessing students, I use peer-assessment.					
15	When assessing students, I use self-assessment.					
16	After an assessment, I inform my students on how to improve their weak points.					
17	I provide written feedbacks to students for written assessment method.					
18	I provide oral feedback to students for presentations.					
19	I provide guidance to help students to assess others' works.					

Key: Table of specification is a two dimensional charts that relates the instructional objectives to the course content and specifies the relative emphasis to be given to each type of learning outcome. It balances the number of items in a test/exam with the contents taught.

Rules of test construction – principles /guidelines used to prepare good items/questions.

Alternative assessments –any assessment except paper and pencil tests. For example, oral presentations, peer and self-assessment, group work, projects, seminars, etc.

20	I provide guidance to help students assess their own work.					
21	I give the opportunity for students to ask questions in and out of class if they face difficulty regarding the lesson.					
22	I check the quality of test/exam items using item analysis .					
23	I discuss the assessment criteria with for students.					
24	My assessment contains questions that need critical thinking.					
25	Using my assessment, I ask students to apply their learning to real life/ practical situations.					
26	I give students enough time needed to complete assessments/tasks.					
27	In my instruction, I am teaching to/for the test .					
28	I use previous assessment results when I plan to teach.					
29	I show the test or exam items to colleagues or to the examination committee before administration for comments.					

Key: Item analysis—is a statistical procedure which is used to identify good items from poor items and effective destructors from ineffective destructors. It is the process of examining students' responses to each test item to determine the quality of test items.

Teaching to/for the test – the instruction/teaching is given by considering the items which will be included in the test/exam.

Part III: Perception of Instructors about Assessment and their Practices

Instruction: Please put **tick (√) mark** under the number corresponding to the statement which describes your perception about assessment and your practices by selecting the alternative scales given bellow.

5 = strongly agree

3 = undecided

4 = agree

2 = disagree

1 = strongly disagree

No.	Statement	Level of Agreement				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I understand assessment plays an important role in the teaching learning process.					
2	I understand that assessment is the process of administering a test to students in order to assign grades.					
3	I understand that assessment is a process which helps instructors promotes students from one level to the next.					
4	I understand that assessment refers to tests that instructors give at the end of a topic or term.					
5	I understand that assessment is a tool that an instructor uses to inform teaching and learning.					
6	The primary purpose of assessment is to provide information to the learners and the instructor.					
7	The main purpose of assessment is to check learners' understanding.					
8	I understand that assessment improves the quality of instruction.					
9	I understand that assessment guides the instructional decisions.					
10	Assessment should help learners become more self-reflective about their learning.					
11	Assessment should help instructors focus their instruction more effectively.					

12	My assessment practices are good enough to ensure quality instruction.					
13	I am satisfied with my current assessment practices.					
14	I assess my students on every lesson.					
15	Assessment should be integrated as a regular part of each lesson					
16	A combination of different assessment methods provides a more realistic picture of students' achievement rather than using one method of assessment.					
17	A combination of different assessment methods is vital if instructors are to get a balanced picture of learner achievement.					
18	After an assessment, I inform my students on how to improve their weak points.					
19	Instructional objectives must be considered carefully before meaningful assessments can be designed.					
20	Written tests and examinations are usually the best ways to assess learners' understanding.					
21	Assessment should always be aligned (matched) to learning outcomes being measured.					
22	Assessments should be designed to provide learners with multiple opportunities to improve the quality of their work before it becomes to final.					
23	Assessment methods should allow learners to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways.					
24	The main emphasis in instructors' assessment is on what students know, feel and do.					
25	I know that my assessment practices help students to learn independently.					
26	Assessment of students' work consists primarily of marks and grades.					
27	I know that my assessment practices foster/promote the knowledge of my students.					

28	I have limited knowledge on the different forms of assessment.					
29	I lack the professional guidance to use different assessment methods.					
30	Assessment is most effective when it yields frequent and on-going feedback.					
31	I use feedback not only to show their mistakes, but also what they need to do to improve.					
32	I consider providing frequent feedback to all students as boring and tiresome.					
33	I am interested to provide immediate feedback after I give any assessment to students.					
34	I believe that assessment is useful to improve to teaching profession.					
35	I feel that assessment is useful to students to know the subject well.					
36	I have adequate skill and knowledge about how to assess students.					
37	For me continually giving a test means assessment.					
38	I understand that table of specifications (a table which helps to balance the contents and objectives of a course) is good to prepare tests and exams items.					
39	Informing the purpose of assessment prior to implementation is important.					
40	Showing the test or exam items to colleagues or examination committee before administration for comment is important.					

Part IV: Predominantly used Assessment Methods

Instruction: The following table contains lists of assessment methods used by instructors in higher institutions. Judge to what degree you are using these assessment methods and give your response by putting a **tick "√" mark** in one of the boxes under the alternative scales given.

Assessment Method	The degree to which the assessment method is being used				
	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Quizzes					
Mid-semester tests					
Final examinations					
Group works/assignments					
Presentations					
Individual assignments					
Oral questions					
Research reports					
Seminars					
Project works					
Performance (practical) tests					
Portfolio					
Observations					
Self-assessment					
Peer assessment					
Laboratory works					

Add other tools if you use any

Key: Portfolio –A purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student’s efforts, progress and achievements.

Part V: Problems Instructors Experience Regarding Assessment

Instruction: The following table contains lists of problems or factors that may limit the assessment practice of instructors in higher institutions. Rate to what level the following problems affect your ability to apply different assessment methods and give your response by putting a **tick "√" mark** in one of the boxes.

Factors/Problems	Alternatives				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Large number of students in the class					
Lack of awareness on different assessment methods					
Lack of training on the application of different assessment methods					
Shortage of time					
High workload					
Students' low achievement level					
Insufficient experience in teaching					
Insufficient resources					
Negative belief about the use of different assessment techniques					
Lack of commitment to use different assessment methods					

If there are other problems, please list them.

Thank you very much for your assistance!

Appendix B: Students Questionnaire

**University of South Africa
College of Education
Ethiopian Regional Centre**

Dear students,

My name is Abatihun Alehegn and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education, University of South Africa (UNISA). This questionnaire is designed to gather information for the research entitled “Student empowerment through instructors’ assessment practices at a University in Ethiopia”. Thus, the purpose of this questionnaire is to get information about your perception regarding instructors’ assessment practice in the enhancement of students’ empowerment. In addition, the researcher will try to see the problems you experience while you are assessed by different assessment mechanisms.

Your response to the items of this questionnaire will remain confidential and the results will be used to examine the existing practices of assessment systems in the university. I hope you will be able to take time and carefully complete this questionnaire. I greatly appreciate your participation in this research. The questionnaire will take approximately 20–25 minutes to complete. Thank you for devoting your precious time to fill this questionnaire.

Please, use a **tick “√” mark** to indicate your responses for items with alternative responses and briefly state your responses for the open-ended items.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

The Researcher

Part I: Background Information

1. Years of Study: 2nd 3rd
2. College: _____
3. Department: _____

Part II. Students Perception about Instructors' Assessment Practices

Instruction: Here some statements are given to see students' perception about instructors' assessment practice. Please put **tick mark (√)** under the number corresponding to the statement which describes your perception by selecting the alternative scales given bellow.

5 = Strongly agree

3 = Undecided

4 = Agree

2 = Disagree

1 = Strongly disagree

No.	Statement	Level of agreement				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I am satisfied with my instructors' assessment practices.					
2	I like my instructors' modes of assessment.					
3	My instructors assess my academic performance continuously.					
4	My instructors have good skill about how to assess their students.					
5	My instructors' assessment practices are good enough to ensure quality instruction.					
6	My instructors' assessment practices foster/promote my knowledge.					
7	After tests are scored, my instructors provide an opportunity for students to discuss the correct responses.					
8	My instructors avoid interrupting students when they are taking tests.					
9	My instructors provide good environment during test administration.					

10	My instructors' assessment criteria are understandable and clear.						
11	My instructors help students understand how to complete assessment tasks.						
12	My instructors present situations where I can reflect on my work.						
13	In my instructors course guide book (course outline), there is information concerning the assessment methods to be used.						
14	My instructors use assessment tools to examine what I have learned.						
15	My instructors assess higher order thinking.						
16	My instructors' assessment criteria are known prior to assessment/test time.						
17	My instructors give me written feedback concerning for written assessments.						
18	My instructors present oral feedback concerning oral presentation.						
19	My instructors use assessment to motivate learning.						
20	My instructors assess our prior/earlier knowledge.						
21	My instructors provide assessment tasks based on the real life situation.						
22	The tests and exams are from the contents what we have learned.						
23	Our instructors inform us the time of assessment.						
24	My instructors remind me to follow the directions strictly.						
25	My instructors tell students to pace themselves so as to complete the entire assessment.						
26	My instructors show the assessment result on time.						
27	The assessment process enables me to see my abilities in the courses.						
28	The assessment process helps me to achieve the objectives of the courses.						

29	Items on tests and exams are directly related to the performance level of students.						
30	Items on tests and exams discriminate/differentiate high performing and low performing students.						
31	After each assessment my instructors inform me how to improve the next time.						
32	My instructors encourage me to reflect on how I can improve my performance.						
33	My instructors ask questions in a way I understand.						
34	My instructors ask questions that help me gain understanding of the subject matter.						
35	My instructors give opportunities for students to assess each other's work.						
36	My instructors provide guidance to help students to assess their own work.						
37	My instructors provide guidance to help students to assess one another's work.						
38	I am assessed on what the instructors have taught me.						
39	My instructors explain how each type of assessment is being used.						

Part III. Open-ended Questions

1. When you are assessed by your instructor, did you face any problem? If so, what problem did you face? (በመምህርህ/ሽ በምትመዘንበት/በምትገመገምበት ጊዜ ለምሳሌ ፈተናስት-ፈተን/ኛ፣ በፕረዘንቴሽንዎቅት ወዘተ... ችግር ገጥሞህ/ሽ ያወቃል? ከሆነስ ምን ችግር ገጥሞህ/ሽ ያወቃል?)

2. Did the assessment methods that your instructors employ empower you? If so how? (መምህራን የሚጠቀሙት የምዘና ዘዴ አንተን/ችን ያበረታታሃል/ሻል፤ በጥልቀት እንድትመራመር/ሪ ያደርግሃል/ሻል? ከሆነስ እንዴት?)

3. In general, how do you see your instructors' assessment practices? (በአጠቃላይ የመምህራንን የምዘና አተገባበር እንዴት ታየዋለህ/ሽ?)

Thank you very much for your assistance!

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Instructors

1. Did you believe that an instructor teaching experience, training background, and level of education affect the practices of assessment? If so, how?
2. How did you practice assessment? Did you use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods that you used?
3. Do you think that the assessment strategy that you are applying help students to be creative or proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?
4. Did you use an assessment method which increases students understanding of a course? If so, how?
5. Are there problems that you face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that you face? Are there mechanisms that you used to solve the problem? If so, what are the mechanisms?
6. How can student empowerment be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices? What assessment mechanisms did you used to empower students in their learning?
7. Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?

Appendix D: Interview Guide for Department Heads

1. How are the instructors in your department practice assessment? Do they use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods implemented by instructors in your department?
2. Do you think that the assessment which is implemented by instructors in your department help students to be proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?
3. Do you inform or push instructors in your department to use different assessment methods? If so, what is their response? If no, way?
4. How do instructors in your department perceive when they are required to use different assessment methods?
5. Are there problems that lecturers in your department face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that lecturers face in the practice of their assessment? What mechanism did you used to solve the problem?
6. How do instructors in your department empower students using the assessment methods?
7. Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?

Appendix E: Transcribed interviews of Instructors and Department Heads

Interview with Biology instructor – Instructor B, June 14, 2014

***Interviewer:** Did you believe that an instructor teaching experience, training background, and level of education affect the practices of assessment? If so, how?*

***Interviewee:** Of course yes. When I start from teaching experience, through experience you may change a certain assessment that you have used before and use another new method or you may use the previous one by modifying it. So, you will have a chance to modify/revise an assessment method that you are using today and on the next day on another time on the bases of your experience. That means, your teaching experience will have a value for your day to day practice.*

Training background of instructors has its own effect in their practice of assessment. If you take pedagogy courses at the undergraduate level, that is great! You may not face difficulty about the different assessment methods. In addition, short term in-service training like HDP (Higher Diploma Program) increases your effort in using and applying different assessment methods. But, the education level of the instructors that is, being Bachelor Degree, Masters Degree or PhD is not as such determining the practice of assessment. But it increases the knowledge of the teachers in his/her field of study. But mainly teaching experience and training takes the lions share for the practice of instructors' assessment

***Interviewer:** When I came to training background, have you taken courses during your stay in college or university at undergraduate level?*

***Interviewee:** No! In the first place, I didn't take pedagogy courses. But before joining a university I was a high school teacher. So, at that time there was in-service short term pedagogical trainings. This is one. Secondly, in relation to training background, I had been a teacher from grade 5 to 12. During this time,*

always I modify my assessment methods from one academic year to the next academic year. When I teach grade 9, 10, 11, and 12 students I have attended trainings. And the training helped me to have better knowledge in assessment and teaching methodology.

Interviewer: *How did you practice assessment? Did you use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods that you used?*

Interviewee: Commonly, I used three or four assessment methods. But all of them are not as such effective. This may be because the limitation of the assessment methods and the perception of the students as well as instructors. For example, when I plan to give a certain project, they are not willing to do the task. That means the perception of students is totally negative and they don't consider it as an assessment method and if you look at the output it is not as such effective because of the perception they have. When I give projects my assumption is that it can cover a number of areas and also increases their skill and knowledge but the students do not consider it as one of the assessment method. They have limitation in organizing and writing the task.

For example, I asked students to write a project which can be affected in Debre Markos town. But some of the students didn't do the project by themselves rather they copy from someone's work and other students write something on the bases of the theoretical background which is told in the class.

In general, the assessment methods that I have used commonly are paper and pencil tests, group and individual assignments, laboratory works and certain projects.

Interviewer: *Do you think that the assessment strategy that you are applying help students to be creative or proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

Interviewee: No! The one that I am using is not efficient.

Interviewer: That means is the assessment which is mostly used for marks and grads?

Interviewee: Most of the time yes.

Interviewer: Is assessment method that you employed didn't make students creative/proficient?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: What is the reason behind?

Interviewee: I can mention a number of reasons. It is not because of the characteristics of the assessment methods. As I told you by taking projects as an example, the perception of students is always to copy something from someone else. So, the perception of the students does not encourage you to use different assessment methods. The other one is the perception of the instructors or the department is not good. They are not interested to assess critically the performance of each student. Due to these and other factors the assessment methods that I am using does not make the students creative and proficient.

Interviewer: *Did you use an assessment method which increases students understanding of a course? If so, how?*

Interviewee: For example, if there is an exit exam, the instructors are measured on the bases of the exit exam result and they may target to make the students creative and proficient. Because the exit exam questions and grades are not developed by the subject instructors, it may be done by other external body. So, in this case to make the students creative and proficient, instructors may use different assessment mechanisms. And their focus becomes to equip students and to grasp the necessary knowledge, efficiency and thinking skill. But now in the system I deliver the course, I assess them and giving grade. Here is the main or key point. If my performance is measured on the bases of the students' grade, my teaching and assessment method becomes grade oriented. Therefore, with this system how the students understanding could be increased and how they could be empowered?

Interviewer: *Are there problems that you face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that you face? Are there mechanisms that you used to solve the problem? If so, what are the mechanisms?*

Interviewee: Yes there are problems.

- The one and the major problem is the system more focuses on the students to get better grade and giving pass mark rather than knowledge. In short the system makes the students grade oriented.
- The limited language skill of the students is another problem. You may phrase/write a question in a good way but the students may not understand it easily and the students didn't write anything on the answer sheet or the space provided for them for paper and pencil tests.
- There is shortage of organized laboratory equipments.
- Due to their large number in one class and workload on instructors it difficult to evaluate effectively each student.
- Lack of pedagogical training. For this the mechanism is giving refreshing training for each instructor whether they have pedagogy background or not and this should be part of the system.
- Weak academic background of the students. Most of the students joined different college and departments are not based on their interest. For example, when we see most students who join in my department (i.e., Biology) it is to escape from the challenging courses like mathematics, physic and chemistry. Relatively biology department has no advanced, mathematical courses.
- The other one is students' background in relation to their language skill. It is known that the formal instructional media in the university is English. But in practice the instructors used mixed language. An instructor may use English and Amharic (the mother tong) because some instructors noted that the main focus is the knowledge the students gain not the language. But at the end the assessment is given in English. Here, there is a gap. Some instructors have also problem of language. An instructor didn't speak one hour lesson in English. Therefore, the medium of instruction used in the class is a great problem.

- The system creates a big problem. In my view, the system focuses on the students to get grade only not to what extent they achieve the objectives of the course/lesson.
- There is interference from the top management (like department heads, college heads and others) in the assignment of grades. Here the system does not target the objective and knowledge of the students they have. It more focuses on marks and grades the students earn. In my view there should be a system which focuses on the knowledge that the students gain instead of grade.
- There is mismatch between the objective and the assessment methods being used.

Interviewer: *How can student empowerment be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices? What assessment mechanisms did you used to empower students in their learning?*

Interviewee: When we assess students with different assessment techniques effectively, we can make them creative. In general we can empower them. In my view the main aim of the assessment that we are using is to check to what extent the students achieve the objective of a course. So, if your assessment is on the basis of the students' skill and knowledge, there is a tendency to empower them.

Interviewer: *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: There is no standardized assessment policy in our department. But at the department level we are ordered to use continuous assessment and summative assessment. In the harmonized curriculum also there is a direction of assessment for each course. But if we face difficulty to apply the assessment methods indicated in the harmonized curriculum due different problem, we change it and use the usual paper and pencil assessment methods.

Interview with horticulture instructor - Instructor H, June 26, 2014

Interviewer: *Did you believe that an instructor teaching experience, training background, and level of education affect the practices of assessment? If so, how?*

Interviewee: Thank you very much for having me. Let me start from the first one. I believe yes. From my own experience training background, teaching experience and level of education affects the assessment method of instructors. When I start from teaching experience, I start teaching in 2007/08. So, my teaching experience always have been showing an improvement from the first I started and every year it has its own different experience or I got different experience. So, there is a lot of improvement in my teaching.

The other one is regarding the training background. I have taken short term pedagogical skill training as well as related to my academic background (major courses). So, when I attended the trainings my experience in teaching and my assessment method is totally different from the one that I am using previously. For instance, I have not taken pedagogical courses during my first degree and my masters (second degree) as well. But after I have attended different pedagogical skill trainings including HDP (Higher Diploma Program), totally I changed my assessment method. I have no any idea regarding the active learning method and the different assessment methods before the training. But after attending the program, I totally changed my assessment method. Totally I use different and continuous assessment method. So, this one can affect as well.

The third one is level of education which affects my assessment method. So, when I compared myself during my first degree and masters, it is totally different. The assessment method, the teaching method and everything is different. So, it affects the assessment method.

Interviewer: *How did you practice assessment? Did you use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods that you used?*

Interviewee: Ok! Yes, I used different assessment methods. Let me start from the most widely used and to the least one. I used group discussion most frequently almost in every class. This is the predominant one. The second one is presentation (individual and group) after discussion. So, I practice this as well. The other one is assignment. Besides these the one like tests, quizzes (accidental tests), and final exam. In addition to this, I used ice breaker frequently, which is really helping me. Always when I go to the class I have different ice breakers like it can be general knowledge, drawing exercise, anything with reward like money, pen, CD, etc. So, this one is really helping me.

Interviewer: *Do you think that the assessment strategy that you are applying help students to be creative or proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

Interviewee: Let me answer this question in two ways. The earlier assessment was only meant for grade. But currently I changed my strategy. The students have to show me different skills and knowledge that I required. This is checked by using different assessment methods. During my lessons in different trainings I come to know that I have to know my content and objective. So that at the end of the day, I have to make sure that the students should have to meet the objectives of different contents. Not only the course objective, I have also different chapter objectives. So, due to that one currently the assessment method is meant to evaluate their level of understanding and different aspects. Therefore, it is not simply for marks and grades only. It is to make them creative and proficient.

Interviewer: *Did you use an assessment method which increases students understanding of a course? If so, how?*

Interviewee: Yes. I used different assessment methods to see the students' level of understanding. But the one I actually currently like most is to create competition between students. You can give them different topics in group. So you will evaluate them they are going to present. If there is really competition so I cross check whether every student understand or not. So, besides this I give individual assignment to know whether they understood the subject matter or not.

Interviewer: *Are there problems that you face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that you face? Are there mechanisms that you used to solve the problem? If so, what are the mechanisms?*

Interviewee: Yes. As I have told you before I used group discussion as an assessment method. So, all of the students are not actively involving in the discussion. This is my headache always. Only few students and the idea of few students involved in the assignment.

- The other one is when you evaluate them they complain about the marks and grades they earn, particularly in assignments. They think that in assignments as they will get full mark if they write something which is related to the issue. Always they complain on the value they are obtaining. They don't mind about their knowledge but they focuses on the mark they are obtaining. This is the major problem that I am facing by now.
- Large class size is the other major headache to use/practice different assessment methods frequently. The number of students in my class ranges from 45 to 60. It is difficult to give timely feedback to individual students.
- Students' dependency has its own impact in assessing students properly through assignment. In presentation and other group tasks only few students are involved.
- Extra workload is also a problem. Due to the work load I have, I couldn't give frequent and immediate feedback to my students.
- There is no equipment to show practical issues and to support the theoretical concept.
- Cheating is the major problem in our department. I our department we tried to solve by:
 - Coding the question paper
 - Use proper setting arrangement of the students in the exam room
 - Giving advice about the consequence of cheating
 - Splitting the large class in to two smaller classes
 - Assigning two invigilators in the exam room and informing them to carefully supervise the students
 - Shading the answer sheet in black

- The classroom is not cleaned and there are broken chairs in the room. The chairs are not sufficient and the students waste their time in pulling the chairs here and there.

Interviewer: *How can student empowerment be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices? What assessment mechanisms did you use to empower students in their learning?*

Interviewee: I tried to use different item format in one test/exam paper like multiple choice, true-false and others because it helps to see the skill of students in different way. So, if you include different item formats you can favor most of the students and you can reach most of them.

Besides this I tried to include individual assignments and the students get good mark. To some extent, I use peer assessment in group presentations.

Interviewer: *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: Yes. At the department level we are required to use continuous assessment and the weight of each continuous assessment should not be more than 10%. And the weight of the final exam should not be more than 50%. This is checked by my nearby boss (i.e. the head of the department) when I submit the mark list and grade report.

In general, I don't know whether there is a written and known assessment policy but informally we are required to use continuous assessment.

Interview with psychology instructor - Instructor P, June 24, 2014

Interviewer: *Did you believe that an instructor teaching experience, training background, and level of education affect the practices of assessment? If so, how?*

Interviewee: In my view the answer is yes. These variables affect the assessment practice of instructors. The teaching experience of instructors will have its own role in teaching and assessment. When we see training background yes it influences the assessment practice of instructors. Because if you have no pedagogy background, that means if you didn't take any pedagogy courses, you couldn't know how to measure the understanding/achievement of students and in general you may face problem to use different assessment methods. Level of education also influences your practice of assessment. As the level of students increases, the level of instructors should also increase in the same way. That means, senior students should be taught by instructors having better level of education (like senior lecturers, doctors and professors) than fresh instructors. Because the courses for senior students may be to some extent advanced.

In general, the three variables determine the assessment practice of instructors.

Interviewer: *How did you practice assessment? Did you use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods that you used?*

Interviewee: I use an assessment methods which is not less than 5 or 6. These are:

- Presentation
- Group quiz – here I use this method because it is good to support and encourage students with the problem of anxiety and at the same time to bring /develop cooperative learning.
- Individual quizzes
- Group assignments/projects
- Attendance is also used as an assessment method
- Final exam as summative assessment method is used at the end of a course or semester.

Interviewer: *Do you think that the assessment strategy that you are applying help students to be creative or proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

Interviewee: Actually it is for both. That is, some of the assessments used are to make the students creative/proficient and the other are simply for marks and grades. As you know we assess students in different way. For example, some students prefer giving answer orally instead of writing and vice versa. In general, a single assessment method is not effective to make the students creative and proficient. Every assessment method has its own strength and weakness. The assessment methods that I have listed before have their own strength and weakness. But as a total effect there is a way to make the students creative and proficient. But still there may be a gap because there is no individual assessment except paper and pencil test/exams and oral assessments. We didn't properly assess the talent of students. In this regard/aspect, in my view all the assessment method could make the students creative and proficient. But to some extent the assessment methods that I have listed before have their own contribution in making the students creative and proficient.

Interviewer: *Did you use an assessment method which increases students understanding of a course? If so, how?*

Interviewee: I think so. Even if most of the assessments used are paper and pencil test and within the test/exam there are different item formats which measure the understanding of students. For example, when you use a good easy item type, you can see the creativity and idea organization skill of a student. And when you use good multiple choice item format, it helps to see the understanding and critical skill of a student. Therefore, in my view I tried to use different assessment methods to increase the understanding of students for a course. In general, if you used application items, cases, and others you can measure and increase the understanding of students.

Interviewer: *Are there problems that you face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that you face? Are there mechanisms that you used to solve the problem? If so, what are the mechanisms?*

Interviewee: Of course yes, there are problems that face on me not to implement the assessment properly but not always. The assessment that you planned to use may not match with the level of students. That means most of the students have weak academic background. The other one is your expectation and the readiness of students may be different. Because you may expect and say that the students should know up to this level, but you couldn't get them on the expected level. They may be below the level.

And the other problem is there is lack of language proficiency.

The mechanism related to the above problems may be:

- balancing the items which will be used with the level of the students
- not over expecting the performance of the students
- It is better if you use a pre-course assessment or pre-course delivery to see the position/level of students.

Dependency in group assignments is also a problem. That means the assignment is done by one or two students only. The other members didn't do anything in the group task. They simply write their name and ID number and put their signature. So, with this problem it is very difficult to make the students creative and proficient. The mechanism that I suggest to solve this problem is that each group member will show his/her own contribution in the group task like by randomly calling the member to present the task.

There is a problem in cooperative learning. That means able/better students are not interested to assist/support weak students.

Large class size is also a major problem to evaluate the performance of individual students. For example, if the number of students is more than 40, it is difficult to evaluate individual students because there may be shortage of time to give feedback for each student. Therefore, the large number of students which are found in one class has its own negative impact in the proper use of different assessment methods.

Cheating is another factor which affects the assessment of students. That means if a student obtain good score by cheating, the result does not reflect his/her real performance.

Interviewer: *How can student empowerment be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices? What assessment mechanisms did you use to empower students in their learning?*

Interviewee: It can be enhanced by continuously assessing with different assessment methods. The assessment should focus on the critical skill of students rather than rote memory and so on in each chapter/section. So, this empowers students. By the way empowerment is relative.

Interviewer: *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: Currently I don't know whether there is a policy in our department or not. But once upon a time there was a policy which was developed at the university level. Even we didn't refer it to use properly. In general, there is no clear policy regarding assessment at university level.

Interview with Health officer instructor - Instructor H, July 03, 2014

Interviewer: *Did you believe that an instructor teaching experience, training background, and level of education affect the practices of assessment? If so, how?*

Interviewee: Yes, teaching experience, training background and level of education can influence the assessment practice of instructors. These are not the only factors but they may take the big share.

An instructor's earlier teaching experience will contribute to the current practice. As we learn or train more, that is Bachelor and Masters Degree, the teaching and assessment practice may be changed. Mostly we practice like our previous instructors. That means we take the different university instructors' mode of delivery and assessment practice as a reference when we attend/learn our Bachelor and Masters Degree even if we didn't take specifically pedagogy courses

during our stay in the university. Here some instructors have good teaching style and assessment mechanisms.

The training background also affects the instructors' practice of assessment. For example we learn by physicians (medical doctors or specialists) in our field who are clinical and background. Their teaching style is difference. Therefore, when you learn with different instructors having different academic background, their teaching approach and assessment may be different. Of course the assessment mechanism may be different on the nature of the courses.

Since we are using what our instructors are using/practicing, our assessment practice may have limitations. Our earlier instructors assess us only once out of 80% and sometimes out of 100%. They use only multiple choice or essay questions with limited number. So, in my view this may be lack of training background that means lack of knowledge of pedagogy or limitation of pedagogical trainings.

Therefore, we are reflecting/using what our instructors are using. Hence, by taking short term trainings, we can fill the gap and we can use better teaching style and assessment methods. In conclusion, lack of training background limits our practice of assessment.

Interviewer: How did you fill/compensate the gap?

Interviewee: What we have a good opportunity is we take HDP, three to five day short term trainings by the university and we took trainings by non-governmental organization (for example, JAPIGO) about effective teaching skill and assessment. In addition, we read manuals and modules related to pedagogy. So, with this we compensate/fill the gap that we have.

Interviewer: How did you practice assessment? Did you use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods that you used?

Interviewee: Based on the course guide book/course outline that we developed, we assess our students. In the guide book or outline the different forms of assessment which will be used like formative and summative assessments will be indicated in brief. For example under the formative assessment;

- Oral questions and discussion during the class hour
- Group assignments
- presentation

And under summative assessment test and final exams are used. This helps to determine the result or grade of students.

The dominant one is final exam with at least three item formats. For example, multiple choice, essay, matching and true false.

Interviewer: *Do you think that the assessment strategy that you are applying help students to be creative or proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

Interviewee: Actually there are gaps. Mostly it is for grading purpose. We didn't worry about their understanding. We have limitations in integrating the theory with the practice because our mode of delivery is more of lecture method. Therefore, there is a gap. But we can create mechanisms which helps students to be creative and proficient.

Interviewer: *Did you use an assessment method which increases students understanding of a course? If so, how?*

Interviewee: Yes. As I told you before, there are gaps. But with the limitations, we tried to use different assessments to measure the undersanding of students for a course.

Interviewer: *Are there problems that you face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that you face? Are there mechanisms that you used to solve the problem? If so, what are the mechanisms?*

Interviewee: Yes there are many problems. For example,

- Large class size, that is large number of students in one class is the major problem
- Weak academic background of students. As a result of this the students did not fully involved in the group assignments and discussions and some students' shay while they are required to discuss and present the give task. In general, there is lack of involvement in group tasks. There is dependency.
- Shortage of time to assess individual students because of their large number.
- There is a problem of commitment from both sides (from instructors and students). For example, students are not interested to do assignments. They need to get score and pass in easy way.
- In health department cheating is not as such a major problem. But we tried to examine 25 students in one class; the invigilators use proper setting arrangement and use code when test items are developed.

Interviewer: *How can student empowerment be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices? What assessment mechanisms did you used to empower students in their learning?*

Interviewee: We tried to assess in a transparent way. I use different types of assessment methods.

Interviewer: *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: Ya! There was a guideline before. But now fortunately we use SBMR (Standard Base Management and Recognition). So, using this instructor assesses his or her own students. This is done at the college level. But at the university level I don't know whether there is an approved assessment policy or not.

Interview with mathematics instructor - Instructor M, June 30, 2014

Interviewer: *Did you believe that an instructor teaching experience, training background, and level of education affect the practices of assessment? If so, how?*

Interviewee: The instructor experience is vital or important for the practice or use of different assessment methods because as the instructor has many years of teaching experience he/she understands the behaviour of different students. That means instructor knows how a student's understands a lesson. Therefore, experience is very crucial in the practice of assessment.

Training background will have its own contribution in the practice of assessment. When I attend my masters' degree I have taken one pedagogy course. The pedagogy course that I have taken has its own contribution in my current practice of assessment even if it is not sufficient. But the other in-service short term trainings play a great role in my practice of assessment. For example, higher diploma program, SBMR (Standard Based Management and Recognition) and other pedagogical trainings.

The level of education is very crucial. Having Bachelor degree is not enough to teach at university. You must have Maters degree or PhD degree to teach at university.

Interviewer: *How did you practice assessment? Did you use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods that you used?*

Interviewee: Normally there are two methods. The one which is used for grading that is summative and formative. Always I apply the formative one during the teaching learning process. The way that I apply/implement formative assessment is on the bases of 1 to 5 grouping. Therefore, there is presentation, test below 10% mark, assignment with presentation, home take exam (from the work sheet). And for the summative assessment final exam is used.

Interviewer: Do you believe that home take exam/test make the students creative/proficient?

Interviewee: It doesn't make the students creative but it helps to score better grade and get a pass mark.

Interviewer: Do you think that the assessment strategy that you are applying help students to be creative or proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?

Interviewee: It doesn't make the students creative. Mostly it is for marks and grades.

Interviewer: Did you use an assessment method which increases students understanding of a course? If so, how?

Interviewee: Yes. In the assessment methods that I have used, I tried to consider the different groups of students. That is one third of the questions is basic and considers the level of low achievers. And the other one third of the questions considers the average students and the rest one third of the questions are developed by considering high achievers. In general, I tried to consider the three groups of students when I develop question for different assessment methods.

Interviewer: Are there problems that you face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that you face? Are there mechanisms that you used to solve the problem? If so, what are the mechanisms?

Interviewee: Yes there are many problems that limit me not to use different assessment methods properly. For example;

- Large number of students in one class. In Technology College there are up to 70 students in one class. This creates problem to assess and give appropriate and timely feedback to each and every student.

- In tests/exams to examine/invigilate the students properly, only one instructor is assigned. But this is not enough. Therefore, shortage of invigilator instructors is a problem.
- Shortage of material like paper is a problem in our department.

As a mechanism, for shortage of instructor during invigilation, we tried to make the task in group of two or three, by inviting/begging free instructors.

- Lack of commitment from the students side to the give task effectively.
- There is a problem of cheating. But I am very serious during exam when I invigilate. In general, the students use different mechanisms of cheating. And this is a problem in assessing the real performance and understanding of students.

Interviewer: *How can student empowerment be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices? What assessment mechanisms did you used to empower students in their learning?*

Interviewee: I couldn't believe all in all the current assessment practice of instructors empower students. But when we assess students properly with different assessment mechanisms and when we give tutorial class using additional time for those students who scored below the average and for those who face difficulty in understanding a certain lesson, there is a tendency to empower them. To do this the course load of instructors should be reduced or minimized. Otherwise, it is very difficult to give tutorial classes and assess each student's performance.

Interviewer: *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: No there is no standardized assessment policy. But in the harmonized curriculum there are different assessment methods that have to be used for each course.

Interview with Mechanical Engineering instructor - Instructor ME, June 17, 2014

Interviewer: *Did you believe that an instructor teaching experience, training background, and level of education affect the practices of assessment? If so, how?*

Interviewee: Yes I believe that they affect the assessment practices of instructors. Because for example when we take the first one that is teaching experience, as we got experience, not only assessment but also other tasks can be done on the bases of the information/experience that we gained before. New or inexperienced instructors couldn't properly use different assessment methods. So as we get experience on different issues we implement it properly. Training background is also the same. There becomes change in our practice when we take training which is related to teaching, assessment and the overall curriculum. Therefore, the training background of instructors is vital to properly assess students. The third one is level of education. It has an influence on the assessment practice of instructors. I believe that an instructor who has master degree can assess his/her students better than an instructor who has BSC degree because he/she may have better experience and knowledge. In general, the three variables can affect the assessment practice of instructors.

Interviewer: *How did you practice assessment? Did you use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods that you used?*

Interviewee: Currently in my teaching leaning process I use different assessment methods on the bases of the curriculum and my experience. I have also my own assessment methods which is different from others. That is;

- i. *Accidental tests (quizzes)* – As I have completed one lesson topic I assess students through accidental quiz. This helps me to see to what extent the students grasp/understand the daily lesson and ready for the next.
- ii. *Individual and group assignments*
- iii. *Group discussion* – I ordered students to discussion on a certain issues on the bases of 1 to 5 grouping

- iv. *Tests* – from one/two chapters
- v. *Final exam* which considers the whole portion of the course.

Interviewer: *Do you think that the assessment strategy that you are applying help students to be creative or proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

Interviewee: I think the assessment methods that I have used measure the different skill of students. Therefore, I assume that it is not related to marks and grades. So, this makes the students creative and proficient. For example, some students those who are mark oriented may need assignments having a maximum weight. Because there is a tendency to copy someone else work and got good score. In this case the assessments used do not make the students creative and proficient. But when the assignments are properly used it will have its own benefit like the students will develop experience sharing and sociable skill. The other one is individual accidental quiz which always make them creative and reduced obtaining marks through dependency (i.e., promoting from one level to another by the shoulder of others). Group discussion is also used. When I use this method I didn't inform early the issue/topic. But after the lesson I ordered them to discuss on a certain topic.

Tests and final exam is used. Here the students prepared themselves and show their individual performance.

Interviewer: *Did you use an assessment method which increases students understanding of a course? If so, how?*

Interviewee: Yes. There is no new idea here. I have already touched in the above question number three.

Interviewer: *Are there problems that you face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that you face? Are there mechanisms that you used to solve the problem? If so, what are the mechanisms?*

Interviewee: Yes I face different problems. It is a very good question. I can tell you the problem that I face in different assessments. For example;

- i. In assignment students may copy some others work. That means there is plagiarism. For this one the mechanism that I used is presentation.
- ii. In group discussion, the better group leader may reflect/answer the questions. But here I ask each member of the group to their contribution and participation.
- iii. Large number of students in one class is the other big problem. In my class currently the average number of students is 65 and above. I planned to use presentation but due to their large number I couldn't do/use presentation as an assessment method. It is very difficult to practice or implement. So, what I recommend is the number of students in one class should not be more than 30/40 to the maximum 50. Therefore, it has its own impact in the quality of the assessment that I am using.
- iv. There is lack of commitment to do assignments. From my observation some students didn't do assignments in order to get knowledge. But it is simply for marks and grades. In my view the reason may be their weak academic background.

Interviewer: *How can student empowerment be enhanced through instructors' assessment practices? What assessment mechanisms did you use to empower students in their learning?*

Interviewee: What I want to say here is the assessments which are used are bases for the students' future career. For example, when we assess students for practical course in field trips in industries or factories, it will create good opportunity to empower them. Otherwise if it is limited to paper and pencil tests is difficult to empower them.

Interviewer: *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: Yes. But I am not sure whether it is a policy or not. There is rule in our department to use continuous assessment which should be a minimum of 50%. The rest 50% and below is for final exam.

Interview with Economics Department Head (Head of ED, June 16, 2014)

Interviewer: *How are the instructors in your department practice assessment? Do they use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods implemented by instructors in your department?*

Interviewee: My department instructors follow the usual assessment method which is practiced in the university. There is no exceptional focus regarding the use of different kinds of assessment. For example, they use quizzes, tests, assignments, final exam etc...In short they use the usual assessment methods. They didn't apply different assessment method. They simply apply the above list methods.

Interviewer: *What are the predominantly assessment methods implemented by instructors in your department?*

Interviewee: Ok! Nice question. The predominant assessment methods in our department are test and exams. In our harmonized curriculum it is clearly indicated that at least three tests/quizzes should be given with a weight of 10% each, 20% assignments (i.e., individual and group assignments, project works, and attendances) and 50% final examination. We are just governed by the harmonized curriculum.

Interviewer: *Ok! Are there individual and group assignments and presentations?*

Interviewee: Yes. There are individual and group assignments and also presentation. The instructors use these methods simply for the purpose of variety. But, when we see each method as most our department instructors said the students' presentation is not as such smart and in assignments there is dependency.

Practically, to achieve the objective of a course and to scale up the students knowledge, instructors didn't properly use presentation and other assessment methods. They simply give assignments and roughly evaluate it.

Interviewer: *Do you think that the assessment which is implemented by instructors in your department help students to be proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

Interviewee: This is very interesting question. The answer is no! The assessment that most instructors employed is simply for marks and grades. Here some instructors give marks randomly for assignment and presentation without critically evaluating the students work. But now we are looking our way of assessment practice. For example, for exams and tests we form examination committee at the department level. Therefore, before the tests/exams are administered, the committee critically evaluates and cross checks the items of the test/exam with the contents of the course. That means whether the items of the test/exam are representative of contents covered. This is the task of the exam committee, but up to now there is no as such strong effort in this regard.

Interviewer: *That means there are problems in order to make the students proficient in their study area.*

Interviewee: Yes, defiantly there are problems. It is simply for marks and grades due to a number of reasons.

Interviewer: *Can you list/mention some reasons?*

Interviewee: The first reason is, since the number of instructors is limited and high staff turnover; there is high course load on instructors. Related to this the instructors may be tired and may not use different assessment method in order to make the students proficient. Secondly, most of our department instructors do not have that much knowledge/skill of pedagogy. They have no pedagogy background. That means they may have a limitation of integrating the exam items with the objective of the course. On the other way they didn't select question

purposely to measure the students' knowledge critically. As I have said before it is simply for marks and grades.

Interviewer: *Do you inform or push instructors in your department to use different assessment methods? If so, what is their response? If no, way?*

Interviewee: Definitely yes. First of all, what I did is that I inform/give copy of the assessment guideline that came from PDD (Program Design and Development office) through our college to the instructors of my department. Therefore, when I inform the instructors, since it is a rule that came from the top management (i.e., the college, PPD office) they accept and tries to implement it. But there is a gap between the actual rule and the knowledge of the instructors and their practice. Basically, the exam committee is governed by this rule when they evaluate exam items. Therefore, their perception to use different assessment method is nice even if there are pedagogical limitations and other factors that I have mentioned before.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department perceive when they are required to use different assessment methods?*

Interviewee: Their perception to use different assessment method is good even if there are different problems. The critical question that most instructors raise is in the use of re-exam/re-assessment. They are not voluntary to reassess students. That means if a student score below half for each assessment instructors are not interested to re-assess students. For this case, they give different reasons. For example, shortage of time to develop question for the re-assessment and sometimes, some students fail in quizzes/exams intentionally to sit in the re-quiz/exams to perform better. Unwarranted or illogical argument, especially after quiz and exam mainly due to the desire to get "cheap" points/grade. Students were opportunists because they had to sit for a test/exam/quiz a certain day and if they think that they could not do the questions, they had the right to fail and waited for the re-quiz/exam/test which was in human to them and burden for the instructor. Therefore, regarding the re-assessment they have poor perception.

Interviewer: *Are there problems that lecturers in your department face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that lecturers face in the practice of their assessment? What mechanism did you used to solve the problem?*

Interviewee: Yes. The basic problem is large number of students in one class. It is very difficult to manage and assess the performance of each and every student in one class. It is very difficult to check whether a student understand a certain lesson or not. The other problem is, as I told you before there are shortage of instructors in our department. They are over loaded. Therefore, they are unable to practice different kinds of assessment methods due to large number of students. It is more the expected. It is about 60/62 student on average in one class.

The nature of the courses in our department is more of theoretical and mathematical. For example, if the questions are work out items it is difficult to marks/score and give comment for large number of students. In this case time is the major problem to use different assessment methods.

The other problem is the classroom. It is not conducive. Since it narrow for 60 and above students, there is suffocation. Some of the arm chairs are broken. And there is no chair and table in the classroom for the instructor.

There is also pedagogical gap (lack of pedagogical knowledge) to use different assessment methods. In general, these are some of the fundamental problems that instructors face to practice assessment effectively.

Interviewer: *What about their awareness and commitment to use different assessment methods?*

Interviewee: They are committed to use different assessment methods even if there is a pedagogical gap. To fill this pedagogical gap, some instructor ask the department to take HDP (Higher Diploma Program – it is a training given for instructors four hour per week for two consecutive semesters) training.

Interviewer: *By what mechanism did you solve the problems? That is, the large class size, high workload and others problems.*

Interviewee: In order to solve the pedagogical problems, there are instructors those who took HDP, and there is experience sharing program in our department regarding research, pedagogy and so on. I think, we recommend this experience could be scale up/transferred to other departments.

Still now for large class size there is no solution. We asked the university management body in different meeting, but there is no reasonable response. So, we are living with the problem.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department empower students using the assessment methods?*

Interviewee: We can divide this issue in to two. There are committed instructors who are interested to apply different assessment methods for the sake of empowering the students' knowledge and there are instructors who enter and come out from the class and assess students for marks and grades. In general, in our department in order to empower students with different assessment methods, different efforts have been made. But it is not sufficient enough. That means there are variations between instructors.

Interviewer: *In relation to the use of different assessment methods, are instructors in you department use peer and self assessment?*

Interviewee: Self assessment is not practice in our department. But peer assessment is practiced to some extent. I have been practiced peer assessment.

Interviewer: *In relation to the preparation of test/exam items, there principles. So did you use test construction principles?*

Interviewee: No. Our department instructors have no pedagogical background. Therefore, when we prepare exam/test items we didn't consider the principles. Simply we develop based on our earlier instructors' way.

Interviewer: *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: Yes. In my understanding, even if it is not considered as a policy, there is an assessment guideline in our department that came from PDD. We can see this question in two ways. The first one is our curriculum is one governing guide. The other one is the university exam rule that is the assessment guide line. So, by mixing this two we are applying. But the only problem is at the university level, there are limitations in informing/clarifying the rules. In short in this regard there are gaps. The majority of instructors are not informed regarding the rules, the nature of the exams and so on. So

Interview with Public Health Department Head (Head of PH, June 27, 2014)

Interviewer: *How are the instructors in your department practice assessment? Do they use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods implemented by instructors in your department?*

Interviewee: the assessment practice of instructors' in our department/college is good. They use multiple assessment methods. The reason may be most instructors took trainings which are organized by **I-TECH**. And **JHPIEGO**. They also took ETS (effective teaching skill) trainings. Even today we are ready to send instructors to attend such trainings. Therefore, such trainings help our instructors to use different assessment methods. In general, when the curriculum is organized it includes formative and summative assessments. In the first one, that is formative assessment instructors use quizzes, tests (maximum 10%), individual and group assignments and presentation. In short, the natures of the courses invite the instructors to use such assessment methods. But now the individual assignment is ignored because of large number of students in one class. Instead, group assignment (1 to 5 grouping) is used. That means, 5 individuals are seen as one

individual in the 1 to 5 grouping. But for individual students reading assignments are given. At the end of the course final examination will be given. There is no midterm test. But, simply we give 3 to 4 tests/quizzes with a weight of 10% each.

When we the verities/formats of a test/exam, what is good opportunity for us is the SBMR (standard based management and recognition). This is run by **JHPIEGO**. There are five areas in the SBMR. The first three are about assessment. Any of our instructors those who do not trainings will be give the soft copy of the document for the time being to read by their own for practice. We inform instructors of our department as one of their job description/aid. When instructors develop test/exam items it is based on this standard (SBMR). That means how the tests are developed and how the cognitive/affective/skill domains are assessed. All these things are available in the document. Therefore, the most commonly used assessment methods in our college are quizzes/tests, group assignments and presentations.

Interviewer: *Do you think that the assessment which is implemented by instructors in your department help students to be proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

Interviewee: Yes. In our college there is PBL (Problem Based Learning). That means, the questions in the assessment are related to the real problems in the real world. And the cases are related to the real life situations. In our view, these make students creative and proficient.

Secondly there are objectives (that is course objectives) and to check the achievement of objectives different exam questions are developed. This is checked by the exam committee. That means whether the objectives are achieved by the exam questions or not. Here, the exam committee is formed on the bases of unit and 1 to 5 grouping. Instructors those who have the same specialization are considered as a unit or one group. Therefore, instructors those who are in one group evaluate their exam each other.

Most of the courses in our department are clinical. The clinical courses before practiced/implemented in the real human being, there is simulation model. The students are assessed based on this simulation model. In general, the course delivery/training and assessment focuses on this simulation model. So based on this we assured that, when the courses are delivered and the students are assessed in this way, they can be creative and proficient in their study area.

When tests are developed, it is based on the problem based learning. The multiple choice items are prepared on the bases of problem based learning. That means it considers the cases, the scenarios, and others. The other formats also consider these.

In general, in tests/exams instructors of our department tries include three or more formats. In the site (clinics or hospital) there are also oral exams. But there may be subjectivity. To avoid/minimize the subjectivity, we assign two instructors to evaluation a students work. One of the instructors may evaluate the short case test and the other may evaluate the long case test. This can minimize the subjectivity or complain raised by the students. This is done in all departments of our college.

Interviewer: *Do you inform or push instructors in your department to use different assessment methods? If so, what is their response? If no, way?*

Interviewee: In fact in our department from the 16 instructors, around 13/14 are senior instructors and they took effective teaching skill training. Already they know their responsibility. I didn't push them. But I inform/remind them to use different assessment methods in department meeting. If an instructor in tests/exams use only one item format (for example, multiple choice question only) it is not fair for all students. Because, there different students in one class. Therefore, instructors should give chance for those students who face problem in multiple choice item formats. That means they have to include other item formats like true false, matching, short answer and others. And this should be checked by the exam committee.

Therefore, there is no significant problem on the instructors' side when they are required to use different assessment methods because the majority of instructors are second degree holders/senior. Around three instructors are first degree holders. And these instructors mostly didn't give courses (advanced courses). But they invigilate students.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department perceive when they are required to use different assessment methods?*

Interviewee: ok! They have better perception. They didn't complain when they are required to use of variety of assessment methods. Because they know how they learn at the undergraduate level. But the problem is in the use of re-assessment. Re-assessment means when a student score below half in quizzes, tests and exams there is another chance be tested again. Therefore, the instructors are forced to re-assess their students those who score below half. But the instructors are not are interested to do this. Because they said that re-assessment didn't make students efficient and proficient. A student who took a test today may take a test on the next day if he/she scores below half from the same portion. So, this doesn't make students creative and proficient. Instead it gives for the student to be relaxed and carless in the first test.

But in the use of a variety of assessment methods, there is no problem in our instructors' side. So instructors said that the continuous assessment is burden for the students and the instructor.

Interviewer: *Are there problems that lecturers in your department face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that lecturers face in the practice of their assessment? What mechanism did you used to solve the problem?*

Interviewee: Since the system is modular, it creates work load on instructors. In one module there are three/four courses. And the courses are given by specialists or most of the courses are specialization courses. So, this creates burden/load on some instructors. As you know if there is burden on instructors, they may not assess their students properly and does not make students creative and proficient.

That means to minimize their load they prepare tests which are easily marked and the items may be simple and may not include different item formats. These instructors said that since we have no time we didn't give assignments and presentation.

But now we tried to solve the problem by the units. The courses are given in teams. In the units instructors those didn't give a course is required to invigilate and score the students test/exam papers.

To some extent there is dependency in assignments and presentation. But in presentation what we did is a student may present the group task and the other members of the group will defend for the questions which are raised by the instructor and other participant students. Most of the time there is presentation for practical courses.

The other problem is shortage of computer and lack of organized ICT laboratory. In the curriculum there is ICT informatics course. Therefore, students to learn this course and practice effectively we send them to ICT department computer lab room but mostly the laboratory is occupied by their own students and the students didn't get the chance for practical tasks and finish the course without practice.

Dependency of a student on other students is not a big problem in our department because their academic background is good. That means their entrance exam result is better than other college students result. For example, the lowest entrance exam result in our department is 465 out of 700. Therefore, top scorer students joined our department even if there may be a student who has better result which is obtained by cheating. Due to this there is no such significant problem of dependency in any task. And cheating is not seriously observed regular students but it is observed in extension students. On students those who cheat, we took a serious major like giving a grade F and up to dismissal. In general dependency and cheating are not the significant problems in our department.

The other one is there are problems of commitment from the medicine department instructors (medical doctors). Mostly they use only tests and exams. Even the exam include only one item format that is multiple choice. If they use other item format for example short answer or essay, they include limited number of questions and they assign maximum mark for each question because most of these instructors (Doctors) have part time work outside the university. So, they may not due attention.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department empower students using the assessment methods?*

Interviewee: we empower students with different mechanisms. For example, we use individual presentation in addition to the class presentation and paper pencil tests. When I say individual presentation, in the site/hospital the students are required to present in hospital on the side of the patient.

The other empowerment mechanism is by giving appropriate and timely feedback for each for each assessment. In addition, to some extent some instructors use peer assessment. And there are instructors those who give praise for actively participating students. I think this is another empowerment mechanism.

Interviewer: *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: Yes. From the university through quality assurance directorate office, there is an assessment guideline. In addition to this, we gained a good knowledge from the SBMR (Standard Based Management and Recognition) training in the practice of assessment. After that we give the SBMR training for other college deans and department heads in collaboration with quality assurance directorate.

Interview with Construction Management Department Head (Head of COTM, June 16, 2014)

***Interviewer:** How are the instructors in your department practice assessment? Do they use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods implemented by instructors in your department?*

***Interviewee:** Ok! We use three types of assessment. For example, continuous assessment (i.e., tests/quizzes, assignments and presentation), summative assessment (final exam) and practical assessments for work shop courses. Here the types of assessment depend on the nature of the courses. For example for drawing courses (i.e., architecture drawing, working drawing, construction drafting and AutoCAD) we give projects. For these courses there are practical assessments. But there no mid test paper pencil test for these courses.*

For work shop courses again the assessment is practical. We have our own work shop. So, the students visit the workshop and do practical task in the workshop. But there is also a theoretical aspect. Therefore, for the workshop courses there are tests, exams, practical assignments and presentation.

In continuous assessment, to evaluate the performance of students, mostly when the course is in progress, we give tests, assignment, and presentation. Specially, in one to five grouping assignments are given.

***Interviewer:** Do you think that the assessment which is implemented by instructors in your department help students to be proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

***Interviewee:** Yes. In our department we assess students not only for marks and grades but it is to make students knowledgeable. We always communicate with our students regarding the teaching learning process and assessment if there are any problems.*

But there may be a gap or problem on some instructors in using different assessment methods and assessing the students' progress. For example there are some instructors those who didn't mark the students project works and exam paper simply they give score and grade by marking sample papers. And they didn't show and give feedback for each assessment.

Therefore, more or less the assessment method which is implemented by instructors in our department makes the students proficient and creative.

Interviewer: *Do you inform or push instructors in your department to use different assessment methods? If so, what is their response? If no, way?*

Interviewee: Yes. Based on the curriculum I inform them to use different assessment methods. When they are required to use different assessment methods, they raise the issue of time because the number of students in one class is very large. To assess each and every student the given time is short and giving feedback is very difficult. In addition there is high load in our department because of shortage of instructors. So, instructors face problems to use continuous assessment. They use limited assessment methods for example mid test (25% to 30%), group assignments (projects) and final exam.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department perceive when they are required to use different assessment methods?*

Interviewee: To some extent they perceive positively. But there are some instructors those who insist not to use different assessment methods. These instructors raise different factors. They said that, with shortage of laboratory materials, large number of students per class and other factors how do we use different assessment method?

Interviewer: *Are there problems that lecturers in your department face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that lecturers face in the practice of their assessment? What mechanism did you used to solve the problem?*

Interviewee: Yes. There are many problems.

- **Shortage of time** – one instructor has from 4 to 5 classes. To evaluate each and every student using different assessment methods and give feedback, time limitation is the big factor.
- **High load on instructors** – since there is shortage of instructors in the department most of the instructors are loaded. One instructor contain from 4 to 5 classes. In addition, there are some instructors who have position at the university level. So, this is another load not to assess their students properly.
- **Shortage of resources** – here for example laboratory materials limits instructors not to use different assessment methods.
- **Large number of students in one class** – the average number of students in one class is 60 and above. So, to assess and give feedback each student, their number creates a big problem.
- **Lack of commitment on some instructors** – some instructors didn't give feedback all in all even if the number of students is large. This is their carelessness. Even in the exam room they didn't invigilate students properly and they open way for cheating. If the instructors didn't show the students result on time, the student cannot be ready for the next.
- **Lack of training** – since our instructors have no pedagogical background, they face problem in the use of different assessment methods.
- **Problems on the students' side** – students didn't submit their project work on time and there is also academic cheating in exams and assignments. In short dependency is the major problem. The major reason for this is that they have weak academic background.

All the above factors hinder the instructors not to use different assessment methods.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department empower students using the assessment methods?*

Interviewee: In my view the 1 to 5 grouping is one mechanism to empower students even if it creates dependency if they practice wrongly. In addition, in our department there is a construction team. In the team, selected senior students

(i.e., students who have better grade) give support (tutorial) for fresh and academically weak students. Instructors also give tutorial class for academically weak students. I think this is another empowerment mechanism.

Interviewer. *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: Yes there is a general assessment guideline at the university level. For example, in the guideline it is indicated that the maximum weight for a test is 10%. But our department instructors didn't strictly follow this guideline because of a number of reasons that I have mention before. For example shortage of time, large number of students per class etc...

Interview with Geography Department Head (Head of G, June 21, 2014)

Interviewer. *How are the instructors in your department practice assessment? Do they use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods implemented by instructors in your department?*

Interviewee: Our department uses continuous assessment and terminal assessment based on the direction of the university. But there is a problem in using a variety of assessment methods. It is as such expected. Mostly the predominant assessment methods are tests, quizzes, and assignments in group and individual. They also use project and field works based on the nature of the courses and there is also presentation for the project work. At last final exam (terminal assessment) not more than 50% is used.

Interviewer. *Do you think that the assessment which is implemented by instructors in your department help students to be proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

Interviewee: Yes, to some extent it makes the students creative and proficient. Assessing students through paper and pencil test is simple for the instructor. But

based on the nature of the courses we give projects and field work because these assessment methods are good for students to make them creative and proficient.

Apart from that students have no interest in continuous assessment. They don't like to be tested out of 10%. But they prefer to take a test out of 20 % and 30%.

Interviewer: *Do you inform or push instructors in your department to use different assessment methods? If so, what is their response? If no, way?*

Interviewee: Yes, I inform instructors to use different assessment methods at department meetings. Always at department meetings we discuss about the teaching learning process and the assessment methods being used. I check whether instructors used different assessment methods when they submit mark list and grade. In the mark list they indicate the type of assessment they used. But I have observed a problem of using a variety of assessment methods.

In general there is a big problem from the instructor side when they are required to use a variety of assessment methods. They are limited to tests and assignments.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department perceive when they are required to use different assessment methods?*

Interviewee: Instructors tried to use different assessment methods. But their assessment is limited to tests and assignments. In test, they give two or more tests. But giving two or more tests does not mean continuous assessment. In general perceive positively.

Interviewer: *Are there problems that lecturers in your department face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that lecturers face in the practice of their assessment? What mechanism did you use to solve the problem?*

Interviewee: Yes. For example,

- Resistance from the students' side. That is the students are not voluntary to be assessed continuously. Instead of taking a test out of 10% twice, they prefer to take a test out of 20%. Instead of doing two assignments out of 10%, they prefer to do out of 20% once.
- Again from the students' side, in relation to project works, the students report is super facial. They simply fabricate the data without going the field.
- In assignments/projects the task is done by some students. All members of a group are not participatory. In short there is dependency.
- In project works the collaborative offices are not willing to assist the students in their field work and students prefer tests/exams instead of field work.
- To some extent large class size is the major problem in the university. But in social science and humanities college large class size is not the major problem.
- Reassessment is the major problem as most instructors reflect. And there is misuse of reassessment on the students' side.
- Shortage of computer lab for GIS.

Mechanisms used to solve the problems are the following:

- As much as possible the instructors inform/discuss the use of continuous assessment
- Instructors cross checked the students work by visiting the offices and sites the students are assigned.
- Instructors tried to solve/minimize the problem of dependency is by calling students randomly to present their task.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department empower students using the assessment methods?*

Interviewee: The assessment is more of focuses on paper and pencil tests. Therefore, with paper and pencil tests only it is difficult to empower students. We

didn't use peer and self assessments. This two assessment methods are not applicable in our department.

Interviewer: *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: In the harmonized curriculum for each course there is a guideline of assessments being used. As to my information, there is no assessment policy. But there is a direction that the weight of each assessment should not be more than 10%.

Interview with Plant Science Department Head (Head of PS, June 19, 2014)

Interviewer: *How are the instructors in your department practice assessment? Do they use different assessment methods? What are the predominantly assessment methods implemented by instructors in your department?*

Interviewee: As you know we implement the modular approach teaching. In the assessment section we use continuous assessment. But there are limitations in the practice of assessment. For example instructors used limited number of assessment techniques. They use only tests/quizzes, assignment/project works and presentation. Sometimes class activity and attendance are used as an assessment method. These are the common assessment methods that our department instructors implement this time.

Interviewer: *Do you think that the assessment which is implemented by instructors in your department help students to be proficient in their study area or is it simply for marks and grades? How?*

Interviewee: On the bases of majority of instructors view, the assessment which is used is just for marks and grades. But there are some instructors those who assess students to make them creative and proficient in addition to the marks and grades they earn.

The view of the majority of instructors is not as such good in using continuous assessment. They said it creates burden/load. In other words, they said it doesn't improve the performance of students. They simply give marks and grade. When we sign on the grade summary sheet which will be sent to the office of registrar I observe grade inflation. The grade the instructor gives for students does not go in line the performance of students. Most of the students earn grade A and B. But their real performance does not show this. This shows that instructors use assessment for marks and grades. When the instructors are asked why this happen, they said that there is a pressure from the department, college and the university.

Interviewer: *Do you inform or push instructors in your department to use different assessment methods? If so, what is their response? If no, way?*

Interviewee: Yes. I inform/impose them to use different assessment methods because it is the direction of the university. But some instructors resist not to use multiple assessment methods. They consider as they are forced to use different assessment methods.

When we discuss with students, they told as that some instructors use limited assessment methods. This indicates/shows that instructor use different assessment methods by force and this becomes spurious in making the students creative and efficient.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department perceive when they are required to use different assessment methods?*

Interviewee: To some extent they perceive positively. They consider as they are forced by their nearby bosses (i.e., department heads)

Interviewer: *Are there problems that lecturers in your department face in the practice of assessment? If you say yes, what are the problems that lecturers face in the practice of their assessment? What mechanism did you used to solve the problem?*

Interviewee: Yes there are different problems. The following are the major problems that instructors' faces not implement the assessment properly.

- From the students' side, they intentionally plan to take re-test/re-assessment to get better result. Even active students (students who perform better) did this task. This opportunity makes students careless because they are expecting another chance. That is the reassessment. Therefore, this creates burden for instructors and it consumes their time.
- There is imbalance between the number of students and the class size. That means there is large number of students in one class. So, this creates big problem in implementing active learning and assessing the performance of each student effectively. Generally, the number of students in one class is not manageable.
- From the instructors side, due to different factors there is resistance to use continuous assessment. Most instructors said that no one interfere me in my subject to use different assessment method. I think it is my mandate.
- The students are not committed to do different assessment tasks. The students' dependency in group tasks/assignments is common. Even in individual assignments most students copy someone else's work and submit it. That means most students lack self confidence in their work. I think if the students lack self confidence, it is difficult to empower them.
- Instructors work load in another factor. That is due to work load, instructors didn't perform/implement based their plan.
- Again instructors teaching experience is also a factor not to assess students properly.
- Weak academic background of students is also a problem in assessment. This time there are academically weak students who join the university. Most students join the university by cheating in their preparatory examination. In general there are students who couldn't write their name with correct spelling. I think this a way for dependency in assessments.
- Lack of laboratory material/insufficient resources.

Interviewer: *How do instructors in your department empower students using the assessment methods?*

Interviewee: To some extent the assessment method which is implemented by instructors empowers students. But with only paper and pencil tests, it is difficult to empower students. Including me instructors in our department didn't use self and peer assessment. There are different assessment methods which helps to empower students as I have learn from HDP training, but we simply focus on paper and pencil tests.

Interviewer. *Is there a standardized assessment policy in your department or college or university?*

Interviewee: There is an assessment guideline at the university level. In the guideline there are list of assessment techniques there are being used by instructors in order to assess the students' progress. But there are problems on the instructors' side in referring and using the assessment guideline.

Appendix F: Research Ethics Clearance Certificate



Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

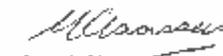
AA Sewagegn [49024647]

for a D Ed study entitled

**Student empowerment through lecturers' assessment practices at a university
in Ethiopia**

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa
College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two
years from the date of issue.


Prof KP Dzvimba
Executive Dean : CEDU


Dr M Claessens
CEDU REC (Chairperson)
mcdtc@netactive.co.za

Reference number: 2014 APRIL/49024647/MC

14 April 2014