

Influence of Continuous Assessment on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Biology in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract: - This study examined the influence of continuous assessment on academic performance of secondary school students in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State. The population of the students was all teachers in public secondary schools in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State, out of which a sample size of two hundred was drawn through stratified sampling technique. The research instrument for data collection was adopted from Falaye and Adefioye (2016). The validity of the instrument titled Perception of Teachers on Influence of Continuous Assessment on Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students Questionnaire was carried out by an expert in Counselling Department, while t-test reliability method was used to carry out the reliability of the instrument, and the reliability co-efficient was 0.76. Data were analyzed using mean, Pearson moment correlation coefficient and t-test statistics. Continuous assessments were frequently administered in senior secondary schools in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State. There was a significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Biology. There was no significant difference between the perception of male and female teachers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment. There was no significant difference between continuous assessment scores of male and female students. It was concluded that the continuous assessment had critical impact on academic performance of secondary school students in Biology. It was recommended that teachers who are well versed in evaluation and assessment techniques should be encouraged and their expertise should be utilized for the said purpose.

Keywords: Continuous assessment; instructional process; evaluation; behavioural change; and feedback.

I. INTRODUCTION

Assessment of learning is not one time movement, it is a progressing process. It includes the procedure of checking on, reflecting and modifying the learning techniques in an arranged and cautious way. When assessment is carried out in classroom in an ongoing or continual way by the teacher, it is called continuous assessment (Samiullah & Anjum, 2017). In this process, observations are made time to time to collect data to determine the level of students' knowledge, understanding and performance. It is done by giving particular tasks to students based on their previous achievement in classroom. Teacher observes the activities of

students to decide about the level of their performance in class.

It also helps them to find out what the learners have learnt. Continuous assessment is part and parcel of instructional process that has to be taken as a key tool in educational quality assurance endeavor (Abejehu, 2016). Airasian as cited in Samiullah and Anjum(2017) reported that continuous assessment as an approach should present the complete number of sources and methods that teacher can apply to collect, interpret and synthesize information about students. The use of this information also helps teachers to understand their students, plan and monitor their teaching to create a feasible culture. Baker and Stets as cited in Samiullah and Anjum, (2017) stated that continuous assessment should include a regular assessment of students' affective structures and motivation in which they will need to express their determination intensely, their work force readiness and their skills in team or group performance background.

One of the most important and significant developments in Nigerian educational system was the introduction of the use of Continuous Assessment (CA) in evaluation of pupils and students in at all levels of schooling. By implication, every teacher from primary to secondary level of education should understand and practice Continuous Assessment. The emphasis on continuous assessment is not limited to Nigeria alone; other African countries notably Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, and Liberia have adopted the same policy. National Policy on Education (NPE) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014) observed that the existing practice (in most institutions of learning) of basing the assessment of students work on final examination and on one-short examination only is no longer tenable.

In recent years, assessment practices in education have been subjected to critical review. Just as views about the nature of learning and educational practice have led to reappraisal of teaching and learning in schools, so there has been a need for an examination of how these are assessment help in improving the academic performance of students. Gipps and Murphy as cited in Adeyemi (2008) view the increasing importance of assessment not only for pupils, but

for the educational system as whole.’ Assessment may be defined as any method used to better understand the current knowledge that a student possesses. This implies that assessment can be as simple as a teacher’s subjective judgment based on a single observation of student performance, or as complex as a five-hour standardized test. The idea of current knowledge implies that what a student knows is always changing and that we can make judgment about student achievement through comparisons over a period of time. Assessment may affect decisions about grades, advancement, placement, instructional needs, and curriculum.

Assessment is often seen as serving three purposes for the teacher: measuring attainment, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and indicating progress or deterioration. However, assessment is also one way by which injustice can be avoided in education. If identifiable groups persistently attain a low level of intelligence or achievement and eventually leave school without being employed, while other similarly identifiable groups aspire higher in their education and get promising jobs, then any technique that promises the early identification of strengths and weaknesses also offer the chance of doing something early enough in school careers to provide beneficial effect of improving the overall performance of the students. Of great concern to the investigator have been several classrooms teaching observed as a part of monitoring team in some secondary schools over the past decade which reveal a grossly inadequate application of various mode of assessment in schools.

The function of a school is the certification of individual learner under its embrace (Idowu & Esere, 2009). To effectively carry out this role, assessment of one kind or the other is a prerequisite. Assessment is a means whereby the teacher obtains information about knowledge gains, behavioural changes and other aspects of the development of learners (Oguneye as cited in Faleye & Adefisoye, 2016). It involves the deliberate effort of the teacher to measure the effort of the instructional process as well as the overall effort of school learning on the behaviour of students. Assessment covers all aspects of school experience both within and outside the classroom. It covers the cognitive as well as the affective and psychomotor aspects of learning. In Nigeria, educational planners and administrators are now more conscious than ever before of their role in the nationwide scheme of curriculum innovation. Not only have new courses been introduced and new contents injected into existing subjects, a fundamental change in the system of assessment of students’ performance has also emerged through the formalization of Continuous Assessment as a major component of evaluation process (Idowu & Esere, 2009).

The comprehensive nature of continuous assessment is in two folds; firstly, the teacher has to ensure that different assessment techniques are employed at different times in the quest for continuous assessment system. This will take care of whatever inadequacy that could have been accessioned by the

students’ inability to maximally express their prowess when a particular assessment technique (e.g. test) is used. For example, a student who has phobia for test could make up for his/her inadequacy in other activities like project or take-home assignment. The comprehensive nature in this strand implies that the teacher will have to conduct series of assessment activities at different stages of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Secondly, the comprehensive nature of continuous assessment also demands that the assessment activity of the teacher is expected to cover the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of the students’ behaviour. This means that the teacher should not narrow his/her assessment activity to issues relating to paper and pencil method of assessing the students’ achievement in a subject, but should also extend such subject’s assessment to such activities like the use of hand and brain (through the coordination of muscles and bones) to produce things that are observable (Faleye & Afolabi, 2007). The affective activities that could be factored in to assessment include class attendance, punctuality, attitude to school work/subject activities, neatness, respect for rules and regulation, cooperation with colleagues, leadership qualities, courage, perseverance compartment, effort at knowing etc. Examples of psychomotor activities include drawing, painting, running jumping, dancing, typing, titration etc.

The third of the characteristics of continuous assessment is its cumulative nature. The cumulative nature of continuous assessment necessitates that the average continuous assessment system of every student in a particular session is carried over to the next class level till the last class of the school level. This is to ensure that the students are not put under the challenge of any teacher who may not be forthright in the administration of continuous assessment for any particular school term. The performance of any student could vary overtime due to a number of reasons not identified here, this shortcoming could be overcome by the determination of average continuous assessment system of other terms or session since the intention of assessment is not to make students fail but to have a valid basis for the classification of students into various ability levels (Faleye and Afolabi, 2007). Therefore, the final continuous assessment system of any student at any level of schooling is the composite of all the continuous assessment system obtained from time to time in a particular term and this is carried forward till the end of school year as the average score that is to be sent out to either the ministry or any of the examination bodies for use as part of the final certification score for the student.

The fourth feature of continuous assessment is that which makes it guidance oriented. It is expected that feedback is obtained after every assessment activity in the school. This feedback is to guide the learner in identifying the areas where he/she needs to try more so as to improve his/her performance. The feedback also serves as ‘eye-opener’ to the

parents or guardians if the concerned students in terms of students' progress in the school. Whenever such reports are obtained by the teacher, he/she is expected to identify areas of students' strength and areas of weaknesses. The teacher is expected to facilitate the consolidation of the areas of students' strength in learning and at the same time plan remediation for the mitigation of the areas of weaknesses. If the teacher could not help the students in there are as weaknesses, the students concerned are expected to be referred to the school counselor for help or even to the parents or guardians for assistance. When these are done, then, continuous assessment is guidance oriented. Continuous assessment should be administered in a certain specified manner. This is available in the 'Handbook of Continuous Assessment published by the Federal Government of Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Science and Technology as cited in Faleye & Adefisoye, 2015). According to the policy demand, there should be a functional continuous assessment Committee in each school. The continuous assessment committee should plan the schedule of assessment activities for the school year or term. The Vice Principal (Academic) is expected to serve as the chairperson of the continuous assessment committee while the school counsellor serves as the secretary and custodian of all continuous assessment system in the school (Federal Republic of Nigeria as cited in Faleye & Adefisoye, 2015). It is the responsibility of the committee to identify the assessment activities for the term and articulate them clearly for every teacher in the school, usually at the start of the term or session.

In teaching and learning, feedback is an important tool for the sustenance of good performance as well as a veritable instrument for the improvement of poor performance. The teacher is expected to give prompt feedback to students whenever any assessment activity is conducted. If and when the teacher will be unable to give feedback, it is important that students are not given any assessment task because once students discover that the teacher will not mark the test, assignment or class work given to them, the tendency is for them not to take the teacher serious again. There is also the likelihood of students to be complacent, thereby developing poor study habit. When the students are sure that their teacher will mark any assessment task given to them and report same to them on time, and when they are also made to realize that every assessment task counts, then, they will take their teacher seriously and would always want to prepare ahead for any task to be given by the teacher (Faleye & Adefisoye, 2015). The study therefore examined the influence of continuous assessment on secondary school students' academic performance in Hong Local Government Area, Adamawa State.

Statement of the Problem

Since the introduction of continuous assessment system by National Policy on Education in early 1980s, there are many challenges associated with its use in practice and implementation. In almost every year during processing of the

Secondary Schools examination results, NECO and WAEC have identified an aspect of schools turning in high continuous assessment marks of their students which does not correlate at all with their respective final examination subjects marks. One would wonder why continuous assessment scores do not predict senior school certificate if continuous assessment is effectively conducted. Common to all these studies is the fact that continuous assessment allows for a diagnosis of the learners' learning difficulties. However, there are variations in the efficacy of the strategies adopted in the studies. In addition, some of the strategies are less applicable because of some obstacles inherent in mastery learning. Little has been done to determine effect of continuous assessment on secondary school students' performance.

The purpose of continuous assessment is to assist in improving learning through administering of assignments and tests as the learning experiences increase before the end of term examination is taken. As good as the purpose for which CA was initiated, some teachers/students in Hong Local Government Area complain of the drudgery of so many variant of structured and unstructured test and the teachers see the conduct of so many tests as extra work and burden. As a result, the main purpose of continuous assessment is gradually being lost. It is in the light of this the researcher seeks to investigate the influence of continuous assessment on secondary school students' academic performance in Hong Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following questions are formulated to guide the study

1. What is the frequency of administering continuous assessment among secondary school students?
2. What is the attitude of secondary school students toward continuous assessment?

Research Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were formulated and will be tested in this study.

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Biology

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female teachers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment.

HO₃: There is no significant difference between continuous assessment scores of male and female students.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted a survey research design to identify the influence of continuous assessment on academic performance of secondary school students in Biology. An assessment of the influence of continuous assessment in government secondary school in Hong Local Government

Area was carried out in order to investigate its influence on academic performance of secondary school students.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study composed of 3242 teachers in 76 government secondary schools in Hong Local Government Area. 10 senior secondary schools were chosen for the study by simple random sampling techniques; 200 teachers were chosen by stratified sampling techniques using sex and class as a strata thereby, 20 teachers were chosen from each school.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire titled 'Perception of Teachers on Influence of Continuous Assessment on Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students Questionnaire (PTICAAPSSSQ) adopted from Falaye and Adefioye (2016) was used to collect data. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A comprised of demographic characteristics of teachers as respondents. Section B comprised 10 items on attitude of students towards continuous assessment, section C comprised 5 items on

frequency of administering continuous assessment. Records of continuous assessment of students were also used.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The validity of the instrument was carried out by an expert in Counselling Psychology in the Department of Science Education, Adamawa State University, Mubi. The reliability of the research instrument was carried out in Government Secondary School (GSS) Mubi. The researcher used test-retest reliability method. The first test was administered on 30 students, while the second test was administered within the interval of one week. The reliability co-efficient was 0.76.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher with two research assistants administered the questionnaires and collected them on the spot. Thus, retrieved data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as percentages, frequency counts,

III. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the frequency of administering continuous assessment among secondary school students?

Table 1: Summary of responses to questions relating to frequency of administering continuous assessment

S/N	Items	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Total (%)
1	I often conduct class test for the students	196(98%)	4(2%)	200(100%)
2	I regularly give students assignment	188(94%)	12(6%)	200(100%)
3	School management regularly invites parents concerning the performance of their children	66(33%)	134(67%)	200(100%)
4	I often draw students attention to their performance in Continuous Assessment	196(98%)	4(2%)	200(100%)
5	I give students three Continuous Assessment before terminal examination	200(100%)	-	200(100%)
6	I have time table for continuous assessment for the students	190(95%)	10(5%)	200(100%)
7	I do always draw test from the topics that I have taught the students.	200(100%)	-	200(100%)
8	I mark and return the students scripts to them to identify areas of weaknesses and strength	200(100%)	-	200(100%)
9	I do correction of the continuous assessment with the students.	198(99%)	2(1%)	200(100%)
10	I regularly score students on punctuality at school, personality, behaviour, assignment and test.	198(99%)	2(1%)	200(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 shows that out of 200 respondents 196(98%) agreed with the statement that I often conduct class test for the students, while 4(2%) disagreed with the statement. Out of 200 respondents 188(94%) agreed that they regularly give students assignment, while 12(6%) strongly disagreed with the statement. Out of 200 respondents 66(33%) agreed that school management regularly invites parents concerning the performance of their children, 134(67%) disagreed with the statement. Majority of the respondents 196(98%) agreed with the statement that I often draw students attention to their performance in Continuous Assessment, while 4(2%) disagreed with the statement. The entire respondents 200(100%) agreed that they give students three Continuous Assessment before terminal examination.

The table further revealed that majority of the respondents 190(95%) agreed that they have time table for continuous assessment for the students, while 10(5%) disagreed with the statement. The entire respondents 200(100%) agreed that they do always draw test from the topics that they taught the students. Similarly, the entire population 200(100%) agreed that that they mark and return the students scripts to them to identify areas of weaknesses and strength. Out of 200 respondents 198(99%) agreed that they do correction of the continuous assessment with the students, while 2(1%) disagreed with the statement and majority of the respondents 198(99%) agreed that they regularly score students on punctuality at school, personality,

behaviour, assignment and test, while 2(1%) disagreed with the statement.

From the result of the above it can be established that continuous assessment are frequently administered in senior secondary schools in Hong Local Government Area of

Adamawa State. Although, school management does not regularly invite parents concerning the performance of their children.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of secondary school students toward continuous assessment?

Table 2: Summary of responses to questions relating to attitude of secondary school students toward continuous assessment

S/N	Items	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Total (%)
1	Students prepare for Continuous Assessment (CA) by having appropriate materials to write with	190(95%)	10(5%)	200(100%)
2	Students during Continuous Assessment test are always punctual in school	200(100%)	-	200(100%)
3	Students notes that are checked by teachers are up to date due to Continuous Assessment preparation	194(97%)	6(3%)	200 (100%)
4	Students are always happy to hear news of conducting Continuous Assessment by their teachers.	60(30%)	140(70%)	200(100%)
5	Students usually cheat during Continuous Assessment	110(55%)	90(45%)	200(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 2 shows that out 200 respondents majority 190(95%) of the respondents agreed that students prepare for Continuous Assessment (CA) by having appropriate materials to write with, while 10(5%) disagreed with the statement. The entire respondents agreed with the statement that students during Continuous Assessment test are always punctual in school. Out 200 respondents 194(97%) agreed with the statement that students notes that are checked by teachers are up to date due to Continuous Assessment preparation, while 6(3%) disagreed with the statement. Out of 200 respondents 60(30%) agreed with the statement that students are always happy to hear news of conducting Continuous Assessment by their teachers, while 140(70%) respondents disagreed with the statement.

Out 200 respondents 110(55%) agreed with the statement that students usually cheat during Continuous Assessment, while 90(5%) disagreed with the statement.

From the results above it can be established that senior secondary schools students in Hong Local Government Area shows positive attitude towards continuous assessment. Despite the fact that the students are not happy to hear the news of conducting continues assessment from their teachers.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Biology

Table 3: Pearson coefficient correlation analysis of the relationship between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	r-calculated	r-critical
Continuous Assessment	200	56.78	10.74			
				398	0.734	0.087
Exam Scores	200	51.60	14.76			

*Significant

Table 3 shows that the r-calculated (0.734) is greater than r-critical (0.087) at 0.05 confidential levels. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Biology, is therefore rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship

between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Biology.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female teachers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the difference between the perception of male and female teachers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	P
Male	100	90.70	17.51				
				198	1.240	1.960	P > 0.05
Female	100	98%	6.23				

* Not Significant (P > 0.05)

Table 4 reveals that t-cal. (1.240) is less than t-crit. (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant differences between the perception of male and female teachers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment, is accepted. Therefore, there is no

significant difference between the perception of male and female teachers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between continuous assessment scores of male and female students.

Table 5: t-test analysis of the difference between continuous assessment scores of male and female students

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	P
Male	100	52.42	19.32				
				198	0.949	1.960	P > 0.05
Female	100	55.72	15.20				

* Not Significant (P > 0.05)

Table 5 reveals that t-cal. (0.949) is less than t-crit. (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant differences between continuous assessment scores of male and female students, is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between continuous assessment scores of male and female students.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that continuous assessments are frequently administered in senior secondary schools in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State. Although, school management do not regularly invite parents concerning the performance of their children. This findings agrees with Hooge (2016) who stated that teachers do not involved parents into their children education because they feel most of those parents are illiterate. Assessment is an important element in Biology teaching, Houston in Aina (2010) opines that teacher must regularly assess the effectiveness of the learning experiences which they have organized to enable the students achieve the earlier stated objectives. Abbas (2009) said ordinary continuous assessment is an ongoing test device which is comprehensive and include the three domains of learning.

The result further revealed that senior secondary schools students in Hong Local Government Area shows positive attitude towards continuous assessment. Despite the fact that the students are not happy to hear the news of conducting continuous assessment from their teachers. This finding agrees with Taylor and Parsons (2011) who stated that despite the fact that continuous assessment is a better way of assessing students performance, students are always afraid to hear the new of continuous assessment.

Test of hypothesis one revealed that, there is significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Biology. This findings agrees with According to Ahukanna, Onu and Ukah (2007) who stated that continuous assessment is of advantageous to the learner because it reveals the ability of the learner early enough to make necessary adjustment for improved performance on the part of the teacher. Alausa (2005) said that continuous assessment is places at the center

of all performance assessment activities. Kenni (2011) further affirms that Continuous Assessment is a mechanism whereby the final score of a student in the cognitive, effective and psychomotor domains of leaning systematically takes accounts of all his/her performance during a period of schooling. Aina (2014) from this, it could be inferred that there is significant relationship between students' score in continuous assessment and final grade in electromagnetism Physics. Cola (2013) reported a strong correlation between continuous assessment and students' scores in examination and also in student final grade in electromagnetism. The researcher concluded that continuous assessment influenced students' performance in physics.

Test of hypothesis two revealed that, there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female teachers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment. This finding is line with Adeneye, Awofala, Veronica and Babajide (2013) who also did not find significant difference between male and female perception towards continuous assessment. Also, test of hypothesis three showed that there is no significant difference between continuous assessment scores of male and female students. This finding agrees with Cola (2013) who did not found significant differences between continuous assessment scores of male and female students.

Test of hypothesis three revealed that, there is no significant difference between continuous assessment scores of male and female students. This finding is contrary to Ige (2007) who found significant different between the continuous assessment of male and female students. Similarly, Joseph, John, Eric, Yusuf and Olubunmi (2015) also reported that there was significant different between continuous assessment scores of male and female students.

V. CONCLUSION

It was concluded that the continuous assessment had critical impact on academic performance of secondary school students in Biology. It is also apparent that it has important implications for understanding how students perceive the feedback they obtain from teachers for their learning. Continuous assessment improved students' efficacy and

confidence about their ability to do well in academic work. When students become confident in their ability to succeed, they become more involved and learn more. On the other hand, students are more likely to attempt educational tasks when the feedback from learning indicates that they cannot succeed. Continuous assessment begins to build students' confidence in their ability to do well, the better off students will be.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Teachers who are well versed in evaluation and assessment techniques should be encouraged and their expertise should be utilized for the said purpose.
- Workshops should be conducted to provide practical training in using continuous assessments.
- Government should promote continuous assessment program under federal and provincial levels and centers for developing assessment techniques in our existing educational environment should be developed at district level.
- n-service teachers should be given training in developing and using continuous assessments through refresher courses. It is the need of the day to develop a new culture for enhancing continuous assessment in teaching.
- Parents should be aware of different assessment techniques and help their children in this respect.

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