

**CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IBADAN NORTH LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

Okeh, Carine C. & Emunemu, B. O.

*Department of Educational Management,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
cacababy84@yahoo.com;
doriben7701@gmail.com*

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between continuous assessment and academic performance of secondary school students in Ibadan North local government areas of Oyo state. The study adopted descriptive research design. The population of the study was one thousand six hundred fifty-eight (1658) senior secondary school 2 students (S.S.2) in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Two hundred (200) respondents were randomly selected which represent 12% of the population using simple random technique. The instrument titled, 'Students' Questionnaire on Impact of Continuous Assessment on Academic Performance (SQICAAP)' with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 was used for data collection and data were analyzed with simple percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between regular conduct of continuous assessment and students' academic performance ($r=12.815$; $p<0.05$), there was a significant relationship between regular marking of continuous assessment and students' academic performance ($r=5.682$; $p<0.05$), the result further revealed a significant relationship between provision of feedback on continuous assessment on students' academic performance. The study concluded that there was significant relationship between the regular conduct, regular marking and provision of feedback of continuous assessment on students' academic performance. Therefore, the study recommended that; teachers should continue to evaluate students through continuous assessment and not wait for terminal examinations, students should always make

themselves available and do any assignment given to them by teachers to improve their academic performance.

Keywords: *Continuous Assessment, Academic performance, conduct of continuous assessment, marking of continuous assessment, feedback provision.*

Introduction

Secondary education is meant to achieve two laudable goals. These are training students for useful living in the society and to facilitate effective transition to higher institution. For secondary school to realize these goals, curriculum meant for this level of education has to be implemented by the teachers and other stakeholders in schools. To this end, education has introduced a method of evaluation known as continuous assessment, which forms an integral part of Nigeria's new policy on education published in 1977 and revised in 2004.

Poor academic performance according to Aremu and Sokan (2003) is a performance that is adjudged by the examiner that placed students above average score. Some significant factors like low retention, parental factors and association with wrong peers account for low academic achievement for secondary school students. The problem of poor academic performance is pervasive in many nations even though a number of countless efforts have been made towards addressing the issue.

It is on record that the performance of secondary school students in Oyo State in WASSCE only manage to be above average of 50% pass with 5 credit in English Language and Mathematics for a period of 20 years only in 2017 alone where 54.18% of students passed with 5 credits including English Language and Mathematics. In 2013 WASSCE, only 21.79% of the candidates who sat for the examination passed with five (5) credits including English Language and Mathematics while more than 75% of the candidates failed in 2014. The WAEC statistics further showed that more than 60% of the candidates that sat for 2015 West African Examinations Council (WAEC) could not make five (5) credits at a sitting while 20.89% passed with five (5) credits including English Language and Mathematics in 2016. The implications of this poor performance could range from wastage orchestrated by making another payment for examination, students'

involvement in social vices which undermines the future of many students that are in school and persistently perform below average.

Examinations and continuous assessment are integral components of our educational structure. They are conducted both formally and informally, practically, at all levels of education and serve as variety of different functions. Assessment in education is an on-going process and it is essential. It is the basis for educational activities. Assessment information is a vital tool in the hands of the professional teacher. It directs, guides and protects both teacher and the learner at every stage of academics (Okwudire, 2005).

According to Erinosh (2008), he defines assessment as a process that involves systematic gathering of data on students' learning behavioural achievement level which includes any method used to better understand the current knowledge that students possess. Thus, assessment is the only possible means to know if students are learning or meeting the instructional expectations of the educational system of the society.

Considering the fact that students' academic performance is an output of the educational system, it cannot be examined in isolation of the inputs and process. Hence, Obanya (2002) submitted that, it is only a combination of quality inputs and quality processes that can produce quality outcomes. Adenuga (2002) attributed the decline in education quality (students' performance) to low and declining level of key inputs such as infrastructural materials, laboratories, libraries and teaching facilities and manpower (classroom teachers) among others. However, continuous assessment generally leads to high improvement in students' academic performance. Assessment is a means where by the teacher obtains information about knowledge gains, behavioural changes and other aspects of the development of learners (Oguneye, 2002). It involves deliberate effort of the teacher to measure the impact of the instructional process as well as the overall effect of school learning on the behaviour of students.

The emphasis being placed on continuous assessment is a clear evidence of its importance. The National Steering Committee on Continuous Assessment in Nigerian Schools led by Professor T.W Yoloye regards continuous assessment as a method of ascertaining what a child gains from schooling in terms of knowledge, industry and character development, taking into account all of his/her performances

in tests, assignments, projects and other educational activities during a given period of term, year, or during the entire period of an educational level (Ipaye, 1995). Continuous assessment is also a method of using the recorded performances of each pupil to help him or her improve on his or her achievement through guidance. Thus, continuous assessment should be systematic, comprehensive and cumulative and guidance oriented.

According to Polloway, Epstein, Bursuck, Rodrique, McConeghy, and Jayanthi (1994), grades provide information for consideration in college admissions. Results provide a framework for talking about how students fare in school and a constant standard to which all students are held. Performance results allow students to be ranked and sorted on a scale that is numerically obvious, minimizing complaints by holding teachers and schools accountable for the components of every grade.

In 1976, Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) was introduced; furthermore, the new policy on education popularly known as the 6-3-3-4 system came into being in 1983 with the primary focus of meeting education of citizenry and equipping the youth with sellable skills that will make them to be self-reliant. The new policy on education 9 - 3 - 4 curriculum is expected to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with emphasis on qualified and dedicated teachers.

The principal purpose of marking continuous assessment is to provide students with feedback on their performance. Marking has perhaps too often been regarded as synonymous with correcting, as if the teacher's task was to provide the student with a complete 'correct' version, written in between the lines. Frequency of continuous assessment is considered important in facilitating retention of material learnt. Shirvani (2009) observed that the frequency of assessment has a mediating effect on students' engagement in learning. Research by Marcell (2008) showed that when the frequency of testing is increased, there is increased student involvement in responding to questions and in discussing the subject matter. Other scholars maintained that frequent testing helps students to monitor their learning and reinforces their engagement with the course as a result of immediate feedback provided (Haigh, 2007; Leeming, 2002). It has also been established that frequent testing has positive impact on future retention of material learnt (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006). Since

retention of material is one of an important components of master learning (Wolf, 2007), it can be inferred that frequent testing contributes to mastery learning. Guskey and Bailey (2001) took a similar stance on the issue of grades. They suggested that if grading was done properly, an increase in students' academic attainment would follow. Okwudire (2005) opines that continuous assessment directs, guides and protects both teacher and the learner at every stage of academics. Ogar (2007) maintained that progress of each student can be measured and monitored through the use of continuous assessment method and appropriate counselling can be put in place as the case may demand. Abadina (2001) observed that the extent of students' progress or students' academic performance as well as lack of it in school subjects can be determined through the conduct of continuous assessment. Also, attitudes and values of students from first day in school to the last day are systematically gathered through assessment.

Continuous assessment of students is key in promoting sound academic performance for secondary school students. Through, regular conduct of continuous assessment and regular marking of continuous assessment by teachers aid academic performance of students. Providing feedback on the continuous assessment conducted for secondary school students helped teachers to know where amendment is required.

Statement of the Problem

As indicated in the background that more than 60% of the candidates that sat for 2015 West African Examinations Council (WAEC) could not make five (5) credits at a sitting, this poses a serious problem to education stakeholders and a serious concern to parents. The implications of this poor performance could range from wastage (when students have to pay for another examination), involvement in social vices such as examination malpractices, hoodlums, hooliganism, to commercial sex workers. This undermines the future of many students that are in schools that persistently perform poorly. To this end, the urgent need to promote learning and improve performance in secondary schools cannot be overemphasized. This is as a result of inconsistent performance of secondary school students in both internal and external examinations nationwide and performance still varies from school to school. The continuous assessment administered in

school might be a good factor in improving students' academic performance in West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE). Therefore, this study is set out to investigate the relationship of continuous assessment on academic performance of secondary school students.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do teachers conduct continuous assessment regularly in secondary schools?
2. To what extent do teachers mark continuous assessment administered on students as at when due?
3. How often do teachers provide feedback to students on continuous assessment conducted?
4. How do secondary school students perceive continuous assessment components?

Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between regular conduct of continuous assessment and students' academic performance.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between regular marking of continuous assessment and students' academic performance.

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between provisions of feedback on continuous assessment and students' academic performance.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design. The target population of the study consists of public secondary school students in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State which has 42 public secondary schools according to Oyo State Teaching Service Commission. Thirteen public secondary schools which is 23% of the forty-two public secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State was randomly selected. Simple random sampling technique was adopted by the researcher to select 20 students from each of the ten (10) sampled schools. The total number of sampled S.S 2 students stood at two-hundred (200). Two instruments were used for

the study. These are: Students' Questionnaire on Impact of Continuous Assessment on Academic Performance (SQICAAP) and 20 items multiple choice Achievement Tests in English Language and Mathematics to determine the level of students' academic performance. The questionnaires contained 20 items each to elicit information from students and teachers. It has sections A, B and C. The questionnaire is divided into three sections. Section A sought for demographic data on the respondents. Section B consisted of 20 items which were subdivided into 5 statements based on the variable measured while section C made up of 20 items multiple choice Achievement Tests in English Language and Mathematics to determine the level of students' academic performance, its reliability test was 0.71. The items were drawn on a four-point Likert scale with a response mode of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) carrying weights of 4,3,2 and 1 respectively. Using Cronbach Alpha, the reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.87. The data collected were analyzed through correlation. Research questions were answered by using descriptive statistics while hypotheses were tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1

To what extent do teachers conduct continuous assessment regularly in secondary schools?

Table 1.1 Responses on Regular Conduct of Continuous Assessment

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	No Response	Mean	STAN. DEV.
1.	Students enjoy take home assignments on daily basis	77(38.5)	80(40.0)	34(17.0)	9(4.5)	00(0.0)	3.13	.850
2	Regular conduct of assignment improves students' learning	134(67.0)	61(30.5)	4(2.0)	1(0.5)	00(0.0)	3.64	.549
3	Teachers always conduct periodical tests	74(37.0)	84(42.0)	28(14.0)	10(5.0)	4(2.0)	3.13	.843

	on weekly basis							
4	Regular conduct of continuous assessment makes learning process easier for students	115(57.5)	74(37.0)	8(4.0)	1(0.5)	2(1.0)	3.53	.602
5	Regular conduct of continuous assessment is burdensome	24(12.0)	45(22.5)	62(31.0)	39(19.5)	30(15.0)	2.32	.982
	Weighted Average						3.15	

Table 1.1 revealed the extent or relationship between regular conduct of continuous assessment. It could be seen that 78.5% of the respondents agreed that students enjoy take home assignments on daily basis. From the table, it could equally be seen that 97.5% of the respondents agreed that regular conduct of assignment improves student's learning. Also, the table revealed that 79% of the respondents agreed that teachers always conduct periodical tests on weekly basis. In addition, regular conduct of continuous assessment makes learning process easier for students as 97.5% of respondents agreed with the item. The table showed that 50.5% of the respondents disagreed that regular conduct of continuous assessment is burdensome. These findings showed that, with weighted average 3.15, teachers to a large extent conduct continuous assessment for secondary school students in Ibadan North local government.

Research Question 2

To what extent do teachers mark continuous assessment administered on students as at when due?

Table 1.2: Responses on Regular Marking of Continuous Assessment

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	No Response	Mean	STAN. DEV.
1.	Marking students' assignments facilitate good students' academic performance	124(62.0)	70(35.0)	3(1.5)	1(0.50)	2(1.0)	3.60	.549
2	Marking of continuous assessment encourage learning	107(53.5)	78(39.0)	14(7.0)	1(0.5)	00(0.0)	3.46	.648
3	Regular grading motivate students to learn	101(50.5)	82(41.0)	10(5.0)	00(0.0)	7(3.5)	3.47	.596
4	Marking of continuous assessment is essential to students good academic performance	98(49.0)	91(45.5)	9(4.5)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	3.44	.607
5	Continuous assessment results are added to students final examination at the end of the term	135(67.5)	50(25.0)	10(5.0)	5(2.5)	00(0.0)	3.58	.705
	Weighted Average						3.51	

Table 1.2 showed the extent to which teachers marked continuous assessment of secondary school students in Ibadan North local government area of Oyo state. It could be seen from the table that 97% of the respondents agreed that marking students' assignment facilitated good students' academic performance. It could be deduced from that 92.5% of the respondents agreed that marking continuous assessment encourages learning. Regular grading motivates students to

learn as 91.5% of the respondents agreed with the item statement. It could equally be seen that 94.5% of the respondents agreed that marking continuous assessment is essential to good academic performance of students. In addition, 92.5% of the respondents agreed that continuous assessment results are added to students' final examination at the end of the term. It could be concluded that with weighted average of 3.51 teachers marked continuous assessment of students in Ibadan North local government area of Oyo state.

Research Question 3

How often do teachers provide feedback to students on continuous assessment conducted?

Table 3. Responses on Provision of Feedback on Continuous Assessment

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	No Response	Mean	STAN. DEV.
1.	Provision of feedback on assignment improves students' learning	124(62.0)	67(33.5)	5(2.5)	1(0.5)	3(1.5)	3.59	.569
2	Students learn better when they know their weaknesses on a subject	118(59.0)	74(37.0)	3(1.5)	2(1.0)	3(1.5)	3.56	.582
3	Feedback on continuous assessment improves students understanding	104(52.0)	81(40.5)	10(5.0)	00(0.0)	5(2.5)	3.48	.595
4	Provision of feedback on continuous assessment encourages students to learn more	103(51.5)	79(39.5)	13(6.5)	00(0.0)	5(2.50)	3.46	.620

5	Feedback on periodical tests improve students' performance	77(38.5)	61(30.5)	10(5.0)	1(0.5)	51(25.5)	3.44	.651
	Weighted Average						3.51	

Table 1.3 revealed how often teachers provide feedback to students on continuous assessment conducted. It could be deduced from the table 95.5% of the respondents agreed that provision of feedback on assignment improves students' learning. It could equally be seen that 96% of the respondents agreed that students learn better when they know their weaknesses on a subject. Furthermore, 92.5% of the respondents agreed that feedback on continuous assessment encourages students to learn more while 91% of the respondents agreed that provision of feedback on continuous assessment encourages students to learn more. Lastly, 69% of the respondents agreed that feedback on periodical tests improve students' performance. It could be deduced given the weighted average of 3.51 that teachers provided feedback to students on continuous assessment conducted.

Research Question 4: How do secondary school students perceive continuous assessment components?

Table 1.4: Secondary School Students' Perception of Continuous Assessment

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	No Response	Mean	STAN. DEV.
1.	Continuous assessment improves students' academic performance	127(63.5)	68(34.0)	1(0.5)	00(0.0)	4(2.0)	3.64	.491
2	Regular conduct of assignments help students to learn	105(52.5)	80(40.0)	8(4.0)	1(0.5)	6(3.0)	3.49	.604
3	Marking of	95(47.5)	79(39.5)	13(6.5)	3(1.5)	10(5.0)	3.40	.689

	students' assignment facilitate their performance							
4	Giving feedback on continuous assessment conducted motivate students to study hard	113(56.5)	70(35.0)	10(5.0)	1(0.5)	6(3.0)	3.52	.621
5	Continuous assessment has no significant impact on students' academic performance	50(25.0)	38(19.0)	39(19.5)	67(33.5)	6(3.0)	2.37	1.202
	Weighted Average						3.28	

Table 1.4 revealed the perception of continuous assessment by secondary school students in all components like regular conduct of continuous assessment, regular marking of continuous assessment and provision of feedback on continuous assessment on students' academic performance. It could be observed from the table that 97.5% of the respondents agreed that continuous assessment improves students' academic performance. From the table, it could be inferred that 92.5% of the respondents agreed that regular conduct of assignment help students to learn while 87% of the respondents agreed that marking of students' assignment facilitate their performance. In addition, 91.5% of the respondents agreed that giving feedback on continuous assessment conducted motivate students to study hard while 52.5% of the respondents disagreed that continuous assessment has no significant impact on students' academic performance. It could be concluded given the weighted average of 3.28 that continuous assessment influence students' academic performance in Ibadan North local government area.

Testing of Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between regular conduct of continuous assessment and students' academic performance

Table 1.5: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between Conduct of Continuous Assessment and Students' Academic Performance

Variable	N	X	S.D.	DF	r	Sig.	Remark
Regular Conduct of Continuous Assessment	200	14.252	2.504	198	.091	.000	Significant
Students' Academic Performance	200	11.93	2.378				

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 1.5 revealed that there is significant relationship between regular conduct of continuous assessment and students' academic performance since ($r = 0.901$; $P < 0.05$). Hence, the research hypothesis 1 (H_0) was rejected since the table showed that there exist a positive relationship between regular conduct of continuous assessment and students' academic performance.

Hypothesis 2

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between regular marking of continuous assessment and students' academic performance

Table 1.6: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between Marking of Continuous Assessment and Students' Academic Performance

Variable	N	X	S.D.	DF	r	Sig.	Remark
Regular Marking of Continuous Assessment	200	12.037	1.871	198	-.138	.003	Significant
Students' Academic Performance	200	11.93	2.378				

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 1.6 revealed that there is significant relationship between regular marking of continuous assessment and students' academic performance since ($r = -0.138$; $P < 0.05$). Hence, the research hypothesis two (H_{02}) was rejected since the table revealed that there exist a positive relationship between regular marking of continuous assessment and students' academic performance.

Hypothesis 3

H_{03} : There is no significant relationship between provision of feedback on continuous assessment and students' academic performance

Table 1.7: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between Provision of Feedback on Continuous Assessment and Students' Academic Performance

Variable	N	X	S.D.	DF	r	Sig.	Remark
Provision of Feedback on Continuous Assessment	200	10.252	1.046	198	.189	.008	Significant
Students' Academic Performance	200	11.93	2.378				

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 1.7 revealed that there is significant relationship between provision of feedback on continuous assessment and students' academic performance since ($r = .189$; $P < 0.05$). Hence, the research hypothesis three (H_{03}) was rejected since the table revealed that there exist a positive relationship between provision of feedback on continuous assessment and students' academic performance.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that there was significant relationship between continuous assessment and students' academic performance. One of the major findings of this study is that regular marking of assignments by teachers enhances students' learning. This is evident from the responses of the secondary school students of public

and private schools respectively. The respondents indicated that regular grading motivated students to learn, especially when such grades are announced or posted for all students. It revealed that marking of continuous assessment is essential to good students' academic performance because continuous assessment results are added to students' final examination at the end of the term. Since, continuous assessment counts in overall performance, students will strive hard to have good scores from continuous assessment given to them by teachers. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Allen (2005) who asserted that the grading or marking practices used by many teachers are designed to communicate students' performance in a number of areas, including both academic achievement and behavioural factors such as student effort, conduct and attitude. When teachers assigned grades, especially final grades, they were communicating a number of messages to students with single mark. According to Zoeckler (2007), teachers often attempt to communicate messages that include level of expectations, level of academic achievement, encouragement and disappointment. However, the findings contrasted that of Hattie (2012) who opined that routinely grading predictably impedes learning in at least three ways. First, it misrepresents the learning process to students, leading them to conclude that making errors is cause for punishment rather than an opportunity to improve. Secondly, it focuses students more on getting good grades than on learning. Third, it makes the classroom environment seem unsafe for many students and would make it seem unsafe to more students if class work were appropriately challenging for the full range of learners.

The finding of this study also showed that provision of feedback on assignment improved students' learning. This in essence meant that when teachers provide feedback after marking students' assignment through correction or other way round, students' learning is improved upon. It revealed that students learn better when they know their weaknesses on a subject. Also, the respondents indicated that feedback on continuous assessment improved students understanding and it is an essential tool to improving students' understanding in the teaching-learning process. Provision of feedback on continuous assessment encourages students to learn more, this is to say feedback on continuous assessment boost students to learn more. Thus, feedback

on periodical tests improves students' performance. The result agreed with the findings of Ilgen and Davis (2000); Kluger and DeNisi (1996) who found out that in order for assessment to facilitate learning, students need to receive information about their performance and the existing discrepancy between the actual and the desired state, and effectively process that information.

Examinations and continuous assessment are integral components of our educational structure. They are conducted both formally and informally, practically, at all levels of education and serve as variety of different functions. Assessment in education is an on-going process and it is essential. It is the basis for educational activities. Assessment information is a vital tool in the hands of the professional teacher. It directs, guides and protects both teacher and the learner at every stage of academics (Okwudire, 2005).

In the same vein, the finding of this study revealed that regular conduct of continuous assessment makes learning process easier for students. The result is in tandem with the outcome of work conducted by Shirvani (2009) who observed that the frequency of assessment has a mediating effect on students' engagement in learning. The result agreed with the work of Marcell (2008) whose finding showed that when the frequency of testing is increased, there is increased student involvement in responding to questions and in discussing the subject matter. Other scholars maintained that frequent testing helps students to monitor their learning and reinforces their engagement with the course as a result of immediate feedback provided (Haigh, 2007; Leeming, 2002). It has also been established that frequent testing has positive impact on future retention of material learnt (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006).

Conclusion

The following conclusions were reached from the results of the study that there was significant relationship between the regular conduct of continuous assessment, regular marking of continuous assessment, provisions of feedback on continuous assessment and students' academic performance from teachers and students in both public and private secondary schools respectively. All components (regular conduct, regular marking and provision of feedback) of continuous assessment are indispensable techniques to promote qualitative

students' academic performance. This reflected that regular marking of continuous assessment by teachers raised academic performance of students and as teachers provide feedback on continuous assessment given to students, students are motivated to perform better, thereby improved their academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. Teachers should continue to evaluate students through continuous assessment and not wait for terminal examinations.
- ii. Students should always make themselves available and do any assignment given to them by teachers to improve their academic performance.
- iii. The stakeholders (principals, teachers, Parents' Teachers Association, State Universal Basic Education Board) should try to educate parents on the need to check their children books at home so that they do all assignments given to them.

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