

Effect of Continuous Assessment (CA) and Examinations to Students' Academic Achievement

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Abstract. The main focus of this research was on the contributions of continuous assessment and examination to academic achievement. The study used an ex-post facto design. The sample used for the study was forty students of the same class from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. Instruments for data collection were their continuous assessment scores and examination scores in two courses. Data were analyzed using means, correlation coefficients and t-test for correlation statistics. The results showed that examinations, which had higher mean scores, made more contributions than continuous assessment in academic achievement. There was also a direct positive correlation between continuous assessment and examinations. The results also showed that there was no significant difference between continuous assessment and examinations. Generally, the findings revealed that students attach more importance to examinations than to continuous assessment since they cannot afford to miss or ignore their end of semester examinations. Recommendations were made which include that continuous assessment questions, scripts, and scores should be moderated internally or externally by measurement and evaluation experts.

Keywords: Continuous assessment, examinations, academic achievement

1 INTRODUCTION

Continuous assessment (CA) is a mode of evaluation in which all the grades a learner has, is taken into consideration during his final grading in a given level of school. Federal ministry of education, science and technology, FMEST (1985:8) defined continuous assessment as “a mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour systematically takes into account all his performances during a given period of schooling.” The document went further to expatiate that such an assessment involves the use of a great variety of modes of evaluation techniques for purposes of guiding and improving the learning and performance of the students.

Continuous assessment should be viewed as a method of assessment in which the teacher periodically or intermittently ascertains what the learner has gained in terms of knowledge, thinking, reasoning, character development and industry from the teaching – learning activities using various instruments namely tests, assignments, projects, observations, interviews, questionnaires and so on. Erroneously, the term ‘continuous’ tends to give the impression that continuous assessment is the same as a non-stop assessment of a learner’s progress within the teaching – learning setting. Abonyi, Okereke and Omebe (2005) advocated that the teacher’s scheme of work or teaching syllabuses should convey the following information as:

- i. The number of assessment for a term
- ii. Data for each assessment
- iii. Topics on which the assessment is to be based
- iv. The behavioural objectives to be assessed and
- v. Types of instruments to be used

According to Okoye (2001), continuous assessment refers to a systematic and objective process of determining the extent of a student's performance in all the expected changes in his behavior, from the day he enters upon a course of study and a judicious accumulation of all pieces of information derived from this purpose write a view to using them to guide and shape the student and to serve as a basis for making important decisions about the child. Succintly, Hudson in Osegbo and Ifeakor (2011) noted that continuous assessment is a constant updating of teachers' judgement about their pupils which permits cumulative judgement about their performance. In summary, a learner's final grade in a level of schooling should be a cumulative of previous grades added to the very final assessment grade got from end of year examination using appropriate instruments with appropriate weights.

According to Iroegbu (2001), examination is a set of tasks or problems intended to measure or give a measure of the extent of knowledge, attitude, intelligence and other mental traits possessed by learners or a number of questions set to measure or establish a learner's skill, cleverness, knowledge, and understanding of a particular subject. Ifeakor (2011) in her own view, stated that examination is the process of finding out how much of objectives in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains a leaner has learned in specific learning tasks commensurate with the level of study he subjected himself to be examined on. What this means is that examination is a process which finds out about what the examinee must have mastered during learning and or preparation for the examination periods. Furthermore, examination is the use of tests and other devices to determine students' abilities to measure what they have learned, to determine the effectiveness of the educational programmes and sometimes to indicate student adjustment. Thus, examination can be adjudged to be a summative evaluation procedure which normally takes place at the end of the semester with the application of standardized or teacher – made questions on the entire learning activities that took place within that semester and usually based on appropriate weighting.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), has laid great emphasis on educational assessment and evaluation in general and continuous assessment in particular. It is on this light that Joshua (2012) observed that continuous assessment has been presented as a genuine attempt to facilitate the implementation of the National Policy on Education so that the goal of liberalizing the assessment and evaluation of students through continuous assessment (CA) may be achieved.

Continuous assessment and examinations, as having being described, are vital in the educational system because in the final analysis, they are the only procedure that give a picture or index of how effectively the learning – teaching process have been conducted, the efficacy of the teaching methods and the extent to which the educational objectives have been achieved (Iroegbu, 2001; Joshua, 2012, Okoye, 2001, Osegbo and Ifeakor, 2011). From the foregoing, the researcher wants to ascertain the contributions of continuous assessment and examination to academic achievement.

The problem of the study posed as a question is: To what extent do continuous assessment and examination of students contribute to their academic achievement? The purpose of this study was to ascertain the mean score of continuous assessment and examination of students in some courses and their correlation coefficient.

1.2 Research Question

1. What is the mean scores of continuous assessment and that of examination of students thus contributing to their academic achievement?
2. What is the relationship between continuous assessment scores and examination scores in determining academic achievement?

Ho: There is no significant relationship between continuous assessment and examination to academic achievement.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational research design. The area of study was Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. The target population was all students from faculty of education. Simple random sampling was used to select forty students (40) which formed the sample size. The instrument for this study was documented results of the 40 students in 2012/2013 session on Edu 331 and Edu 332. The continuous assessment scores and examination scores of the 40 students were subjected to initial analysis by converting all values to 100%. This was to bring the weightings of continuous assessment and examination to the same level since continuous assessment was 30% and examination was 70%.

Mean score was used to answer research question 1 while Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used to answer research question 2. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance with t – test for significance of correlation.

3. RESULTS

The results of the study were presented in tables 1, 2 and 3

Table 1: Mean scores of students in continuous assessment and examinations in the two education courses.

	Edu 331		Edu 332	
	CA / Exam		CA / Exam	
\bar{x}	51.7	60.2	53.1	59.6
n	40	40	40	40

From table 1, the mean scores of continuous assessment of Edu 331 was 51.7 and examination was 60.2 showing that mean score of examination in Edu 331 was higher than that of continuous assessment. In the same vein the mean score of Edu 332 was 53.1 as against that of examination which was 59.6. Invariably, the mean score of examination of Edu 332 was also higher than that of continuous assessment.

Table 2: Correlation coefficient (r) of the course

	Edu 331	Edu 332
r	+.44	+.38
n	40	40

From table 2, the correlation coefficients for Edu 331 and Edu 332 were .44 and .38 respectively. This showed that there was a direct positive relationship between continuous assessment and examinations in determining academic achievement.

Table 3: t – test for the significance of ‘r’ in the two courses

Variable	N	r	t-cal	t-crit	Alpha level	Inference
Edu 331	40	+.44	3.52	1.96	0.05	Significant
Edu 332	40	+.38	2.53	1.96	0.05	Significant

Table 3 showed the t-test for the significance of ‘r’ Edu 331 showed calculated t value of 3.52 and Edu 332 showed calculated t value of 2.53, all of which were higher than the table value of 1.96 at alpha level of 0.05. This was an indication that there was a significant relationship between continuous assessment and examination in determining academic achievement.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study inferred that mean scores of examination of both Edu 331 and Edu 332 were higher than their continuous assessment. Thus, the performance of the students in the examinations were higher than their performance in continuous assessment in the two courses. This means that examinations contributed more than continuous assessment in the overall academic achievement of the students used in this study. This finding has shown that the importance accorded continuous assessment in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) has not been reflected from this study.

However, Njoku (2006) in her study found out that some of the problems associated with continuous assessment, which can affect scores, are felt more in tertiary institutions. She went further to enumerate the problems as: giving make-up tests which may not be equivalent to the missed ones; students having someone else either fellow students, teachers and so on do assignments and tests for them; some students write tests or even examinations for their fellow students on mercenary basis. Secondly, Ifeakor and Osegbo (2014) noted that some students pre-occupy themselves with going to watch films, cyber cafe, birthday parties and even travel out of the institutions rather than sitting for their continuous assessment. Sometimes a single tests can be administered to serve as continuous assessment.

Be it as it may, the implication of this finding is that students are still placing more importance and emphasis on examination than they do on continuous assessment. This may be because examinations come at the end of the semester when they must have had enough time to memorize their notes and their handouts. The correlation coefficients for the two courses were positive. This was an indication that there was a direct positive relationship between continuous assessment and examinations in determining academic achievement. The relationship between the two variables is positive showing a direct relationship. A further analysis was done with the use of t-test statistics for the significance of ‘r’. The results showed that the t-calculated for the two courses exceeded the table values. This meant that there was significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and examination scores. This was a further confirmation that there is indeed a positive relationship between continuous assessment scores and examination scores. From this finding, the interpretation therefore is that while continuous assessment scores increase, the examination scores increase. In the same vein, Iroegbu (2001); Njoku (2006) confirmed in their various studies that those students who obtained high continuous assessment scores also obtained high examination scores while those that obtained low continuous assessment scores also obtained low examination scores. It therefore follows that performance of the students in the final examination is a true results since it tallied with their cumulative continuous assessment. The argument that examination scores are not true scores may therefore not hold in this circumstance. The fact that there was not much variation in the examination continuous

assessment scores and scores showed that measurement and evaluation of the students is quite objective and free from teacher bias.

For the fact that it is quite common to observe students who miss their continuous assessment tests, projects, quiz or assignment, while on the other hand, it is very rare to find students who will ignore or miss their end of semester examination, showed that there is still an inclination of students to the value of examination. Therefore examination still play a more prominent role in Nigerian educational system than does continuous assessment even though the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) has de-emphasized examinations in place of continuous assessment.

5.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research work had shown that there is a positive relationship between continuous assessment and examination, despite the fact that their correlation coefficients were low. The findings also showed that those that scored high in continuous assessment invariably scored high in examinations and vice versa. Furthermore, the study found out that the overall performance in examinations was better than the overall performance in continuous assessment. Therefore, it could be concluded that examinations had contributed higher to academic achievement than continuous assessment.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forward:

1. Continuous assessment should be standardized by stipulating the exact number of tests, assignment, practicals, homeworks and so on and their respective weightings in the overall continuous assessment scores.
2. The percentage weight of continuous assessment should be reviewed upwards to 50%50% in order to encourage students have the same value on continuous assessment as on examinations.
3. Continuous assessment questions, scripts and scores should be moderated either internally by the departmental examination board or externally by some selected measurement and evaluation experts to make the instruments valid and reliable.
4. Teachers should be re-trained on the procedures of continuous assessment as stipulated by policy makers.

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