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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EFFECTS OF PROCEDURAL AND HIERARCHICAL TASK ANALYSIS ON SOUTH-EAST POLYTECHNICS STUDENTS' INTEREST AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN SALES MANAGEMENT <i>KANU, JUDITH AMAKA & OBI CHLAKA A.</i>	1
INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL DETERMINANT ON ANTENATAL CARE SERVICES UTILIZATION AMONG RURAL PREGNANT WOMEN IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA <i>OGUEJIOFOR, HELEN UZOCHUKWU</i>	18
MATERNAL NEGLIGENCE, YOUTHS INDECENCY AND UNPEACEFUL NIGERIAN SOCIETY <i>AFOLABI, ANIFAT ABIODUN</i>	33
EFFECT OF CONCEPT MAPPING ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL ECONOMICS STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA <i>AMINU, ABUBAKAR DANLADI, YAKUBU SANI Ph.D & BALA SANI ABDULLAHI</i>	47
CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN KWARA STATE <i>HABIBAT ABUBAKAR YUSUF & IBRAHIM LUKMAN JAHUN</i>	64
PERCEIVED EFFECT OF CLASS SIZE ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MICRO TEACHING IN ADAMU TAFAWA BALEWA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION KANGERE, BAUCHI STATE <i>Dr. BADA STEVE OLUSEGUN, ADERAYO BEATRICE ARANSIOLA & ADERINTO SANJO</i>	83

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between continuous assessment practices and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin. The population of the study consists of 156 academic staff of all the six schools (Art, Education, Vocation, Language, Science and Remedial Studies) and library in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin. Eighty academic staff were sampled; however, 53 valid responses were obtained. Research instruments used to gather data for this study was a Proforma to measure academic performance of final year students in four core courses for the last three academic sessions (2017-2020) while Continuous Assessment Practice Questionnaire (CAPO) was used to collect data in relation to development and administration of continuous assessment practice of lecturers with focus on 4 scales of formative, summative and diagnostic assessment. The face and contents validity of the instruments implemented through 2 experts in education, items were modified

and ambiguous, very difficult and too easy items were rephrased or deleted from the instruments. The instrument was further subjected to pilot-test with a reliability value of .87 which adjudged the instrument to be reliable for the study. . Two research questions and three research hypotheses were formulated to guide this study. The findings of this study reveal that there was a significant relationship between formative continuous assessment and academic performance of students of Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin with calculated r -value of .640 and p -value of .000 which is less than the significant value of .05. Based on the findings, the study recommends the need to continuously conduct workshops on measurements and evaluation in order to improve and update lecturers and method of assessing students.

Introduction

Assessment is an essential element of educational evaluation process which helps in measuring students' ability in acquiring certain behaviour or specific knowledge for a particular subject, and provides the basis of ascertaining the quality of education at all levels. Learners' assessment is better conceived as a form of two-way communication through which feedback on the educational process or product is provided to concerned stakeholders (McAlpine, 2002). According to Adebowale and Alao (2008), assessment enables the school to achieve an overall objective of having as complete a record of the growth and progress of each pupil as possible in order to make unbiased judgements in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor evaluation in the classroom. Assessment results are used by stakeholders and practitioners in the evaluation of the entire educational system, motivating students to perform better, improving instructional planning and content, as well as certifying students as having attained specific levels of achievements.

Continuous assessment is an important part of the evaluation of students' achievement in Nigeria as students learning outcome is formally assessed through continuous assessment and final examinations. continuous assessment is an education policy of evaluating the students' progress and achievement in schools. Specifically, section I No 9(g) of the National Policy on Education states that educational assessment and evaluation shall be based in whole or part on continuous assessment of progress of the individual. Nigeria uses two levels of assessments that are formative and summative evaluation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). In the same vein, Federal Ministry of Education viewed continuous assessment as a method of finding out what the students have gained from learning activities in terms of knowledge, thinking, reasoning, and character development. The major evidence weighted in support of continuous assessment in schools is that, students who are assessed continuously obtain better results than those of equal ability assessed through a single examination (Nneji, Fatade, Awofala, and Awofala, 2012; Mwebaza, 2010). In this regard, learners' improvement can be tracked, and due support and guidance will be given to the learners for opportunities to improve.

Guskey (2010) suggested that rather than waiting to assess students at the end of a unit, teachers use assessments as an integral part of the instructional process to identify individual learning difficulties and prescribe remediation procedures. Primarily, students are the beneficiaries of continuous assessment as it helps them in varieties of ways. Ebhomien et al., (2012) submit that, continuous assessment involves the use of varieties of modes of evaluation for the purpose of guiding and improving the learning and performance of students. Based on this submission, it could be inferred that continuous assessment help students to develop her abilities to the fullest. Plessis (2003) states that, continuous assessment helps

students to get feedback on their progress and help learners think about the quality of their work.

In the same vein, continuous assessment is of great importance to lecturers as it is used to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, create enrichment activities for learners and help modify their pedagogical strategies to include the construction of remediation activities for learners whose performance is below the expected grade. According to Ellington and Earl (1997), by using different assessment techniques, continuous assessment provides extensive syllabus coverage than terminal assessment as it places more emphasis on worthwhile learning by encouraging regular and systematic study and discouraging last minute cramming from learners. Likewise, it constitutes a useful vehicle for ongoing course monitoring and evaluation by providing early warning on areas where students are having weaknesses or difficulties in their course, thus enabling them to take appropriate measures for improvement. continuous assessment involves the use of varieties of modes of evaluation for the purpose of guiding and improving learning and performance of students. However, this study focus on three modes of assessment which are summative, formative, and diagnostic assessment.

Summative Assessment is the appraisal of learning at the end of an instructional unit and at a specific point in time. It compares student knowledge and skills against standards or benchmark and evaluate the mastery of learning. It is carried out with the objective of determining how the learning progressed and overall impact of learning on attainment of objectives (Oloyede & Oloyede, 2020). Summative assessment according to Hart et al. (2015) plays an important role in education as it provides educators with valuable information to determine the effectiveness of instruction for a

particular unit of study, to make high-stakes decisions and to evaluate the effectiveness of school wide interventions.

Assessment becomes formative when the information is used to adapt teaching and learning to meet students need. Although, formative assessment takes place during teaching learning process to measure students progress, it can also be used to track teachers' progress (Guskey, 2010). When teachers know how students are progressing and areas they are having difficulties, it can assist them to make necessary adjustments and try alternative instructional approaches that can lead to improved student success.

Betts, Hahn and Zau (2011) describe diagnostic assessment as a process that involves making judgements as to how student are performing against the predetermined set of criteria. This involves careful evaluation of detailed data to diagnose strengths and areas of weakness in all students (Hancock, Shepherd, Lawrence & Zubrick, 2013). Diagnostic assessment is used for learning when taking action to adjust teaching. It assesses what learners already know, the nature of difficulties they are having which if undiagnosed might limit their engagement in new learning.

Academic performance which is the degree of students' accomplishment in study indicates students' ability to attain academic goals and objectives and is usually measured through assessments like standardized test performance assessments and portfolio assessments (Santrock, 2006). It refers to what skills students have learned, how students deal with tasks given to them by their educators and also reflect how they are being able to remember fact and communicate knowledge imparted. There are various means through which students' success in academic pursuits can be measured, part of which may include students score in their subjects (Agharuwhe, 2013). No doubt, students'

performances in both internal and external examinations have been a yardstick for determining their academic success or failure.

However, the issue of planning for internal and external examinations and managing continuous assessment and examination in schools remains a global issue as it requires skillful and prudent management of materials. Drawing from previous research studies, John (2011) examined with multiple case study design, the influence of continuous assessment tools on academic performance among high and low performing secondary schools in Tanzania. The findings of the study revealed that even though test and terminal examinations were common assessment tools, the table of specifications were rarely used to the greater extent to guide composing of assessment tools and therefore recommended the use of continuous assessment prototype that comprehensively evaluates students skills under cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Similar study conducted by Bichi and Musa (2015) on assessing the correlation between continuous assessment and examination scores of education courses in North-West college of education, Kano State, Nigeria revealed a significant relationship between continuous assessment and examination scores of undergraduate students in three education courses and recommended the need to improve the quality of assessment methods and ensure transparency since its predictor of future academic performance of students.

The magnitude of work involved in the operation of continuous assessment requires that lecturers be prepared to meet the challenges posed by their workload, planning for proper conduct of series of tests, monitoring the administration of tests, marking and recording of test scores among others (Obi, 2007). Osadebe, (20019) carried out a research on an extent to which lecturer practices continuous assessment in college of education and it was revealed that years of experience among other factors that mitigate

against the conduct of continuous assessment in higher institutions. In spite of these challenges and high premium placed on continuous assessment by National Policy on Education in Nigeria, it is unfortunate to note that some lecturers have difficulty in its implementation owing to the fact that, continuous assessment tests are not often goal oriented due to the limitations of constant validity and test administration process.

There are inadequacies in the availability of standardized instruments used for collating data in continuous assessment tests and a continuous decline in proper documentation and storage of continuous assessment records and related information in most institutions. Most lecturers lack the skills on process as well as the practice of keeping the records of students' achievement as they are scored and graded and according to the weightings given to each component area that has been assessed.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin. Specifically, the study investigates;

- a. the continuous assessment practice mostly used by lecturers of Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.
- b. the level of students' performance in core cores in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.
- c. Examine the correlation between continuous assessment practices and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- a. What continuous assessment practice is mostly used by lecturers of Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin?
- b. What is the level of students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin?

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive design of the correlational type to gather opinion of lecturers on continuous assessment practices in school. The study population comprised of all 156 academic staff of Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, Kwara State. A total 80 lecturers drawn from the six schools (Science, Arts, Education, Vocation, Language, Remedial Studies) and library were used as the study samples. Random sampling technique was used in sample selection of lecturers to provide in-depth information about their perceptions on continuous assessment practices. This is necessitated because students core courses were being examined and lecturers who taught the courses are purposely selected as participants. A Proforma was used to measure academic performance of final year students in four core courses (Curriculum studies, political economy, science and technology in society and adolescent psychology) for the last three academic sessions (2017-2020) while Continuous Assessment Practice Questionnaire (CAPQ) was used to collect data in relation to development and administration of continuous assessment practice of college of education lecturers as used in the study. The scale measures the formative, summative and diagnostic assessment with focus on administration of continuous assessment on students. The face and contents validity of the instruments implemented through 2 experts in measurement and evaluation, few items were modified and ambiguous, very difficult items were deleted from the instrument. The instrument was further

subjected to pilot-test with reliability value of .87 obtained which shows higher reliability and adjudged the instrument as being reliable for the study. The instrument was administered to the participants in the school with the help of one trained research assistant. Out of the 80 questionnaires administered, only 53 were returned (66%). These returns were collated and prepared for analysis. Based on the analysis, the findings are reported below.

Results

The analysis and result of data collected are presented in Tables 1 - 6. Two research questions raised were answered using descriptive statistics of mean ranking order while the three operational hypotheses formulated were tested using Pearson product-moment correlation statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One: What type of continuous assessment practices is used by lecturers in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin?

Table 1: Mean Ranking Order of Continuous Assessment Practices

S/N	continuous Assessment Practices	N	X	SD	Rank Order
1	Summative	53	3.32	.82	3rd
2	Formative	53	3.35	.47	2nd
3	Diagnostic	53	3.86	.52	1st

From the descriptive Table 1, the mean scores and rank order of the participants in summative, formative and diagnostic assessment practices. It further shows the type of continuous assessment

practices commonly used by lecturers in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin. The table revealed that diagnostic assessment practice has the highest mean score of 3.86. This implies that, diagnostic assessment practice is the most used continuous assessment practices by lecturers of Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, while formative assessment has a mean score of 3.35, summative assessment practice has a mean score of 3.32, this implies that, the summative assessment practice is the least type of continuous assessment used by the lecturers in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

Research Question Two: What is the level of students' academic performance in core courses in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin?

Table 2: Mean Score and Standard Deviation of the Level of Students' Performance

S/N	Students' Academic Performance	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
EDU/321	Curriculum Studies	54.65	15.547	Average
GSE/324	Political Economy	47.69	17.734	Average
GSE/323	Science & Technology in Society	53.80	11.329	Average
EDU/322	Adolescent Psychology	48.45	11.845	Average
Grand Mean		51.15		

< 40.00 = Low, 40.00 - 60.00 = Average, > 60.00 = High

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the level of students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, where the mean score in Curriculum Studies was found to be 54.65 and as such considered average. Science & Technology in Society with a mean score of 53.80 was considered as average while the grand mean score of 51.15 clearly shows that

the level of students' academic performance in College of Education was average.

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between lecturers' summative continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

Table 3: PPMC showing relationship between Summative continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin

Variable	N	df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Summative continuous assessment	53		.542	.000	
Students Academic Performance	53	51			Rejected

Significant $p < .05$

The above table indicates a positive relationship with calculated r-value of .542 with p-value of .000 between continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in College of Education. The analysis shows that students on average obtained 51.15 out of 100% in their end of semester examination in some compulsory courses done in school. Thus, from the analysis above, the result (r) is significant ($P < .05$), the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship between summative continuous assessment and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin is rejected. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between lecturers' summative continuous assessment practices and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, Kwara State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between Formative continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

Table 4: PPMC showing relationship between Formative continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin

Variable	N	df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Formative continuous Assessment	53				
Students Academic Performance	53	51	.640	.000	Rejected

Significant $p < .05$

The table above reveals r-value of .640 and p-value of .000 which is less than the significant value of .05 at 51 degrees of freedom, hence, the hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship between formative continuous assessment and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin is rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between Formative continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between diagnostic continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

Table 5: PPMC showing relationship between Diagnostic continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin

Variable	N	df	Cal r-value	p-value	Decision
Diagnostic continuous Assesment	53	51	.175	.000	Rejected
Students Academic Performance	53				

Significant $p < .05$

The table above reveals a calculated r-value of .175 and p-value of .000 which is less than the significant value of .05 at 51 degrees of freedom, hence, the hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship between diagnostic continuous assessment and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin is rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between diagnostic continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that diagnostic assessment practice is the most used continuous assessment practices by lecturers of Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, followed by formative assessment while summative assessment practice is the least type of continuous assessment used by the lecturers in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin. This is an indication that even though lecturers use a range of assessment techniques that are appropriate to the learning activities of students in order to fulfil the primary aim of assessment which is to support learning, undoubtedly, diagnostic assessment is most suitable in providing quality educational enhancement and student academic performance.

It was also discovered that the level of students' academic performance in College of Education was average.

Further analysis tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Statistics (PPMC) in revealed that there was a significant relationship between summative continuous assessment and students' academic performance. The result implies that to some extent, summative continuous assessment contributes to students' academic performance since the correlation between the predictor and criterion variable was positive and moderate. Although summative assessment is used to measure students' achievement, yet it is often considered as a potential for providing feedback to learners. This finding is in line with the submission of Trotter (2006) that summative assessment provides feedback to be used as students' performance indicator which can affect students' future in some ways. Similar submission of Sri & Muthuramalingam (2016) linked summative assessment primarily to students' readiness for progression and evaluation of learners' overall academic performance. The finding is consistent with the findings of Hart et al. (2015) whose studies revealed that despite limited evidence to support summative assessment as critical factor in troubleshooting weaknesses in the school system, it provides educators with valuable information to determine effectiveness of instruction and improved student achievement.

Similarly, findings on relationship between formative continuous assessment and students' academic performance reveals that improved students' performance is attributed to formative continuous assessment. The findings of this study is in agreement with William (2017) and Guskey (2010) whose study found that formative assessment produce significant learning gains as measured by comparing the average improvements in the test scores

of students involved in the innovation with range of scores found for typical groups of students on the same tests.

Further it was revealed that there is a significant relationship between diagnostic continuous assessment practice and students' academic performance. The findings conforms with that of Bichi and Musa (2015) and Betts et al (2011) that diagnostic continuous assessment is very important in teaching and learning of courses at the tertiary institutions as it influence students' performance at the end of the instructional programmes, and their performance during the instructional programme will to a large extent influence their performance in their final examinations. This therefore implies that diagnostic assessment is used for identifying and remedying learning difficulties, errors and misconceptions and significantly improve learning outcomes for all students.

Conclusion

Continuos assessment has been reviewed by researchers over the years to be a systematic collection of grades over a period of time and their aggregation into a final grade. The end product of continuous assessment is to supplement examination grade and enhance students academic performance, hence, continuous assessment is being utilized by educators across all levels of education. While some lecturers adopt the use of summative assessment where students are tested after classroom instructional delivery, some use the formative which is being adopted during classroom instruction. In all, which ever mode of assessment lecturers adopt will affect the academic performance of their students in the long run as revealed in this study. However, one of the most significant continous assessment practice used in the evaluation of students as found in this study at the college of education is the diagnostic assessment. Hence, all lecturers

irrespective of their study, best operate and understand the practice of continuous assessment and its impact of examination of students.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Lecturers should adopt the practice of assessment type that is suitable for the instruction and contents of instruction.
2. Lecturers should bear in mind that their continuous assessment practice affect students' academic performance and thereby give adequate attention during the administration.
3. School management should provide necessary facilities needed by lecturers to monitor the administration of continuous assessment and grading.
4. Lecturers, irrespective of the level at which they operate, should understand the practice of continuous assessment.
5. There is the need to continuously conduct workshops on measurements and evaluation in order to improve and update lecturers and method of assessing students.

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