

## **The Appraisal of Continuous Assessment Practices in Private and Public Secondary Schools in Lagos State**

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### **Abstract**

*In Nigerian schools, continuous assessment is mostly concentrated on cognitive achievement to the detriment of affective and psychomotor domains of learning. This research work reports the findings of the appraisal of continuous assessment practices in public and private secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria. Adopting a survey type of descriptive research, a self-developed questionnaire was administered on one hundred and twenty (120) respondents comprising teachers, vice-principals, and principals from ten (10) randomly selected secondary schools across five educational districts in Lagos state. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics to answer the research questions. Based on the analysis conducted, it was found that continuous assessment is not properly practiced in most secondary schools in Lagos state due to the poor understanding of its concept by most teachers and their attitudes towards continuous assessment practices. It is recommended that teachers should be sent on special training that involves continuous assessment since they are the main implementers, to better their understanding and perceived roles concerning continuous assessment practices, and that school managers and the Government should be consistently and effectively involved, especially in areas of finance and supervision.*

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Appraisal, Assessment, Continuous Assessment, Continuous Assessment Practice

### **Introduction**

In today's world, education is known to be the bedrock of every societal growth and a significant effort and resources, mostly human and material resources. This is because it is the process by which one passes from ignorance to knowledge; that is, money is being expended to fashion out the best form of learning process. Nigeria, as a country, has known the real essence of education; hence, the country is not left out of this process. The totality of educational investment is measured in the quality of the educational

product. Measuring the quality of educational products has been a great concern for Nigeria, which has led the country to evolve its educational assessment methods. In educational assessment, the nature, value, or performance of a student depends on the characteristic tendencies of the student himself, the teachers and their teaching modalities as well as their instructional materials, and the environment, that is, the school environment and the home.

One of the major focuses of the National Policy on Education, since its inception in 1977, is the practice of continuous assessment in the Nigerian educational system. They therefore recommended the use of continuous assessment for taking summative decisions on students' level of attainment at the end of any level of schooling

The Federal Government of Nigeria's Educational policy stipulated the adoption of the 6-3-3-4 educational system as a complete departure from the former 6-5-2-3 system in 1982, and was implemented in Lagos state in 1991. The 6 years of primary education, the 3 years of junior secondary education, the 3 years of senior secondary education, and the 4 years of university degree education, with emphasis on the use of Continuous Assessment at all levels of education.

Continuous assessment can also be described as an assessment approach that should depict the full range of sources and methods teachers use to gather, interpret, and synthesize information about learners, that is, information that is used to help teachers understand their learners, plan and monitor instruction, and establish a viable classroom culture.

The goal of every teacher in the classroom is to impart knowledge, and the main aim of teaching is to help the learners acquire or change certain skills, attitudes, knowledge, ideals, or appreciation (Adeyinka, 2000). In other words, the focus of teaching is to bring about some desirable changes in the learner's behavior. Teaching is said to be effective only when the learners have been able to achieve the behavioral objectives, and to accomplish these objectives, the teachers explain, demonstrate, ask questions, give assignments, raise problems, use teaching aids, hold discussions, conduct quizzes and projects, which are all forms of continuous assessment.

Teachers are the most vital resources in the educational industry because they translate educational policies to the students through teaching and learning

practices, as well as translate programs into actions. They are equally accountable for the set goals and objectives, evaluating the degree of achievement of the students, and accepting responsibility for any inadequacies in the students' performances. In other words, the teachers ensure that there is progress in the task entrusted in their care so that the stipulated goals are achieved. The National Policy on Education acknowledges this when it states that "no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers" (FRN, 2004).

One of the functions of a school is the certification of the individual learner under its embrace, and to effectively carry out this role, an assessment of one kind or the other is a prerequisite (Idowu and Esere, 2009). To effectively assess the students, the various schools need to continuously examine them, not just a one-shot examination at the end of the academic year. This is because a particular student might not be feeling well at the time the exam is being conducted, or a student who might be fortunate to memorize a particular topic just for the exam. In deciding a student's performance in a given subject, depending only on one final examination administered at the tail end of the course is very unjust and unreliable, as performance in that one examination could have been affected by examination malpractices or chance luck.

Since continuous assessment helps to pace the student's learning, motivates the students to study, reveal specific areas of learning difficulties and provides feedback to the students and teachers, and is also perceived as a process that offers comprehensive assessment of the students' learning in terms of wide coverage of the syllables taught, using a variety of assessment techniques and taking into account students' performance over a period of time in a variety of situations, one may obviously ask "if the practice of continuous assessment in schools is such a good thing, why do scores derived from it not correlate with external examination scores?" Or is it that the educators correlate "unlike terms"? In today's world, education is known to be the bedrock of every societal growth, significant effort, and resources, mostly human and material. It is the process by which one passes from ignorance to knowledge; that is, money is being expended to fashion out the best form of learning process. Nigeria, as a country, has known the real essence of education; hence, the country is not left out of this process. The totality of educational investment is measured in the quality of the educational product. And measuring the quality of educational products has been of great concern for Nigeria, as the country has been evolving educational assessment methods. In educational assessment,

the nature, value, or performance of a student depends on the characteristic tendencies of the student himself, the teachers and their teaching modalities as well as their instructional materials, and the environment, that is, the school environment and the home.

One of the major focuses of the National Policy on Education, since its inception in 1977, is the practice of continuous assessment in the Nigerian educational system. They therefore recommended the use of continuous assessment for taking summative decisions on students' level of attainment at the end of any level of schooling

Continuous assessment can also be described as an assessment approach that should depict the full range of sources and methods teachers use to gather, interpret, and synthesize information about learners, that is, information that is used to help teachers understand their learners, plan and monitor instruction, as well as establish a viable classroom culture. Continuous Assessment is a teacher-directed assessment procedure with the aim that the result is included as part of the public assessment. Nevertheless, there have been arguments raised that the issues of quality, scoring, grading, and comparability of standards of the assessment tools could vary from one school to another (Osunde, 2007; Gani & Attah, 2015).

The goal of every teacher in the classroom is to impart knowledge, and the main aim of teaching is to help the learners acquire or change certain skills, attitudes, knowledge, ideals, or appreciation (Adeyinka, 2000). In other words, the focus of teaching is to bring about some desirable changes in the learner's behavior. Teaching is said to be effective only when the learners have been able to achieve the behavioral objectives, and to accomplish these objectives, the teachers explain, demonstrate, ask questions, give assignments, raise problems, use teaching aids, hold discussions, conduct quizzes and projects, which are all forms of continuous assessment.

According to Okoli (2005), the purpose of education is to bring about desirable changes in the behavior of school children, and these changes must not only be relatively permanent but should also be retained and transferred to out-of-school settings. The expected changes are in the areas of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. He further classified the various assessment tools according to the three domains of learning, thus:

1. Instruments for assessing cognitive behavior include the teacher-made achievement tests, standardized achievement tests, intelligence tests, aptitude tests, and teacher ratings.
2. Instruments for assessing the affective behavior include attitude scales, interest inventories, personality tests, and sociometric tests.
3. Instrument for measuring the psychomotor behavior includes performance tests, observational checklists, and rating scales.

Today, continuous assessment is generally acceptable and used in all Nigerian educational levels for both promotional and graduation purposes.

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### **Statement of the Problem**

The case of exam mal-practices, students' miss-conduct as well as poor performances among our secondary school students is increasingly becoming unbearable and the problem of continuous assessment practices in most of these schools is so alarming that people no longer trust the school certificate gotten with reasons that the students are half-baked, especially when a student cannot comfortably pass an external examination without one form of cheating or the other. Examination malpractices take place at each of the following three stages: before examination, during examination, and after examination.

Before examination:

These include collusion agreement between candidates, a syndicate, parents and school authorities, exam bodies, or a creative winding combination to create ingenious modus operandi to cause leakages.

During examination: These include:

1. Cheating, that is, part of the lecture notes. Illicit material copying
2. Exchanging answer sheets
3. Trading points
4. Use of signals
5. Writing on private parts
6. Impersonation, which is a false declaration to be another person.

After examination: These include:

1. Cheating
2. Deliberate mistakes in adding up for those who staple currency notes or plead in the name of God
3. Use of the examination center to discern geographical areas to favor or penalize
4. Alteration of scores.

Various forms of reappraisal have also shown the inconsistencies in the practices of continuous assessment and the decline in students' performances in various subjects in the school system and a lot of them point accusing fingers at the different bodies that are responsible for the evaluation of the schools at various level, such as the teachers, and the school continuous assessment committee, as well as the guidance and counseling at all levels of education and other examination bodies like West African Examination Counsel (WAEC), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), etc. This is because the evaluations carried out by these bodies do not give concise and reliable results, and this has led most universities to introduce the screening test for products of these examination bodies before admitting them.

Advocates of this examination malpractices include the parents or guardians, invigilators or supervisors, and other members of the school community. Adenipekun (2007) noted that during the last Joint Admission and Matriculation Board examination, a student was caught with a mobile phone trying to copy a text message from it, downloading the message, it was discovered that it was answers to the English language paper one questions, which was sent to him by his mother and smuggled in by one of the internal invigilators. Adeyinka (2000) also identified lack of discipline in schools and teachers' attitudes to work as causes of examination malpractice. He pointed

out that most teachers are not committed to their work and, as such, do not cover the syllabus for the subjects.

The above-stated facts clearly portray the cumbersome educational system as a result of the poor practice of continuous assessment, hence, the necessity of appraising the practices of continuous assessment in our secondary schools, particularly in Lagos

### **Objectives of Study**

This research work is designed to investigate the quality of continuous assessment practices in private and public schools in Lagos State. It seeks to assess the following:

1. Understanding the benefits of continuous assessment practices in public and private secondary schools in Lagos State
2. Attitudes and perceptions of students and teachers in the practices of continuous assessment

### **Research Questions**

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the benefits of continuous assessment practices in secondary schools in Lagos state?
2. What are the attitudes and perceptions of students and teachers in the practices of continuous assessment

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a survey-type descriptive research design to investigate the appraisal of continuous assessment practices in secondary schools in Lagos State. The descriptive survey method is a type of research survey that is used to collect data that will enable the researcher to describe systematically the characteristic features of a given population. It is only interested in the description of variables in relation to the population. The study population comprises the principals, vice-principals, and teachers in public and private secondary schools in Lagos Education District four.

A total of ten secondary schools (five private and five public secondary schools) were selected randomly from all the secondary schools in Lagos

State. In each of these selected schools, the principals, vice-principals, and teachers were randomly selected and used in the study, which gave a total of one hundred and twenty (120) participants. The teachers were the central unit of analysis in this study because they are the key factors in the practices of continuous assessment.

## Results

Table 1: Understanding of the importance of continuous assessment practices in public and private secondary schools in Lagos State

S/N	Statement	Affirmative	Negative	Total
1.	The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be introduced in all secondary schools	120 (100%)	0 (0%)	120 (100%)
2.	Not all teachers have sound knowledge of the practice of continuous assessment	85 (71%)	35 (29%)	120 (100%)
3.	Schools that do not meet the stipulated standard of the practice of continuous assessment by the state Government should be sanctioned	110 (91%)	10 (9%)	120 (100%)
4.	Teachers should be sent on special courses involving continuous assessment	120 (100%)	0 (0%)	120 (100%)
5.	Teachers with no knowledge of the importance of continuous assessment practice should be sacked	95 (75%)	25 (21%)	120 (100%)
6.	Most teachers trivialize the practice of continuous assessment practice	70 (58%)	50 (42%)	120 (100%)

In the above analysis, section A, table 1, shows that one hundred percent (100%), that is, all the teachers agreed to the view that the use of Information and Communication (ICT) should be introduced in all secondary schools in Lagos State. About seventy-one percent (71%) of the teachers agreed with the view that not all teachers have sound knowledge of the practice of continuous assessment, while twenty-nine percent (29%) of the teachers disagreed in disagreement of the view.

It further reveals that ninety-one percent (91%) of the teachers agreed to the view that Schools that do not meet the stipulated standard of the practice of continuous assessment by the State Government should be sanctioned, while nine percent (9%) of them disagreed with this view.

It also shows that all the teachers agreed to the fact that Teachers should be sent on special courses involving continuous assessment. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the teachers agreed that teachers with no knowledge of the importance of continuous assessment practice should be sacked, while twenty-one percent (21%) of the teachers disagreed with the view.

The table further observes that about fifty-eight percent (58%) of the teachers agreed with the view that most teachers trivialize the practice of continuous assessment, while forty-two percent (42%) of the teachers disagreed with the view.

In view of the above analysis explains that a proper understanding of the importance of continuous assessment practices would facilitate the proper and effective practice of continuous assessment in secondary schools in Lagos State. This could be done through the combination of several factors such as the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools, introduction of courses that would enhance the practices of continuous assessment in schools, as trained teachers need to update their knowledge as well as all-around exposure to teachers as the main implementers of continuous assessment. The school managers should also be on alert to the proper implementation of continuous assessment, as well as the Government, both state and federal

**Table 2:** Attitudes and perceptions of students and teachers in the practices of continuous assessment

S/N	Statement	Affirmative	Negative	Total
1.	Continuous assessment is problem-based	10 (8%)	110 (92%)	120 (100%)
2.	Continuous assessment practice enhances instruction	120 (100%)	0 (0%)	120 (100%)
3.	Continuous assessment practice is student-centered	95 (79%)	25 (21%)	120 (100%)
4.	Continuous assessment practice does not give a concise picture of the student	0 (0%)	120 (100%)	120 (100%)
5.	Continuous assessment is society-centered	100 (83%)	20 (17%)	120 (100%)
6.	Continuous assessment gives a holistic picture of students' performance	120 (100%)	0 (0%)	120 (100%)
7.	The state Government Standards of	97	23	120

	continuous	(81%)	(19%)	(100%)
8.	Most students are fond of absenting themselves during assessments	118 (98%)	2 (2%)	120 (100%)
9.	Continuous assessment practice should be banned in schools because of poor management by the Government	0 (0%)	120 (100%)	120 (100%)

Table 2 shows that eight percent (8%) of the teachers agreed with the view that Continuous assessment is problem-based, while ninety-two percent (92%) of the teachers disagreed with the view. One hundred percent (100%), that is, all the teachers agreed to the view that Continuous assessment practice enhances instruction.

It further reveals that seventy-nine percent (79%) of the teachers agreed that of the teachers agreed to the view that Continuous assessment practice is student-centered. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the teachers disagreed with the view.

It also shows that all the teachers disagreed with the fact that Continuous assessment practice does not give a concise picture of the students. About eighty-three percent (83%) of the teachers agreed with the view that Continuous assessment is society-centered, while seventeen percent (17%) teachers disagreed with the view.

Furthermore, it shows that all the teachers agreed that Continuous assessment provides a holistic picture of students' performances. About eighty-one percent (81%) of the teachers agreed with the view that the State Government standards of continuous assessment practice are too cumbersome. In comparison, nineteen percent (19%) of the teachers disagreed with the view.

It further reveals that ninety-eight percent (98%) of the teachers agreed with the view that most students are fond of absenting themselves during assessment. Only two percent (2%) of the teachers disagreed with the view. And all the teachers disagreed with the fact that Continuous assessment practice should be banned in schools because of poor management by the Government

The above analysis explains that the attitudes and perceived roles of the students can greatly affect the practices of continuous assessment if not properly checked and controlled, and this can be achieved by giving both the teachers and students a proper orientation concerning continuous assessment alongside its importance to the general performances of the students, both in school and the society at large.

## **Discussion**

The following is the discussion of the findings based on the analysis of the research questions:

### **Understanding of the importance of continuous assessment practices in public and private secondary schools in Lagos State**

In view of the question above, the findings derived explained that a proper understanding of the importance of continuous assessment practices would facilitate effective practice of continuous assessment in secondary schools in Lagos State. This could be done through the combination of several factors, such as the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools, the introduction of courses that would enhance the practices of continuous assessment in schools, and trained teachers who need to update their knowledge, as well as all-around exposure to teachers as the main implementers of continuous assessment. The school managers should also be on alert to the proper implementation of continuous assessment, as well as the Government, both state and federal; otherwise, continuous assessment will not be effectively practiced. Since civilization is the order of the day, our secondary schools should not be left out to remain in the past, but should be fully equipped with new technological tools and techniques in order to be able to compete with other developed countries in terms of educational standards. The result is in line with the findings of Koshal (2011), who observed that closed-book examination makes most students just to memorize all that is learnt without properly understanding them. Also, with this method, students are tempted to engage in examination malpractice.

### **Attitudes and perceptions of students and teachers in the practices of continuous assessment**

The findings in question 2 reveal that the attitudes and perceived roles of the students and teachers have both negative and positive effect and can greatly affect the practices of continuous assessment if not properly checked and controlled, and this can be achieved by giving both the teachers and students a proper orientation concerning continuous assessment alongside its importance to the general performances of the students both in school and the society at large. Motivation goes a long way to encouraging someone to do better in any field of work; as such, the students and teachers should be occasionally motivated and encouraged not just to practice continuous assessment but to

love school activities and education as a whole. Right attitudes, they say, harvest good crops at their due season, and if the teachers and students have such attitudes at the back of their minds, education will be the envy of all, and teaching will be the most sought-after career, as there will not be much stress in the educational industries. This result aligns with Bakhshaliyeva (2023), who found that summative assessment serves as a means to evaluate students' overall academic achievement and understanding of instructional content after the completion of the learning period. Also, Chorpra (2022), observed that setting of examination paper is a strenuous and time-consuming task for teachers. Going further they noted that the teacher has to be thorough and ensure that the examination paper aligns with the purpose/reason for testing the students.

### **Recommendations**

With respect to the above discussions of findings, it is important to make some useful recommendations that would be of paramount importance towards making the practice of continuous assessment very effective in order to elicit students' academic performance in our secondary schools.

The following recommendations are made

1. Enough funds should be allocated to schools by the State Government for the effective practices of continuous assessment
2. Teachers should be sent on special courses involving continuous assessment to improve their knowledge and increase their understanding of the practice
3. Proper appraisals of continuous assessment practice in secondary schools should be carried out by all educationists, as well as the state and federal governments.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the data collected and analyzed, a proper understanding of continuous assessment practice by the teachers who are the main implementers of this practice, as well as good attitudes and perceptions concerning continuous assessment practice among teachers/students, are determinants of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Lagos State. The following conclusions were made:

1. The teachers, when motivated and properly monitored, do better
2. The teachers like to work in a conducive environment and with a small class size
3. Many secondary schools are understaffed
4. Teachers' inputs affect the quality of students produced by the school
5. Availability and adequacy of teachers determine the effectiveness of continuous assessment practice; in other words, school effectiveness and students' academic performance
6. Most of the teachers do not have a proper understanding of the practice of continuous assessment
7. Most teachers trivialize the practice of continuous assessment

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