

Investigation of the Potency of Continuous Assessment in Promoting Academic Excellence among Students of Federal University Wukari

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Abstract: The role played by continuous assessment in promoting academic excellence of students can be judged by making observation and collecting information periodically from specific tasks given to students during their learning process. Present research aimed to explore outcomes of continuous assessment that enhanced the academic excellence of students of Federal University Wukari. A sample of sixty students were taken from various faculties and department across the University for the Experiment. These students were studying various courses in Agriculture, Sciences, Social Sciences, Medicine and Law. Post-test design of control and experimental groups was used. Information on C/A scores of student's performance was obtained from GST being a directorate for all students to undertake CA assessment. However, questionnaire schedule was also used to collect information from respondents. Independent sample *t*-test was used as test of significance. It was concluded that continuous assessment had positive effects on students' academic excellence. It was recommended that teachers who are well versed in evaluation and assessment techniques should be encouraged and their expertise should be utilized for the purpose of enhancing students' academic excellence in federal university Wukari.

Keywords: Investigation, Potency, Continuous Assessment, Academic excellence, Federal University Wukari

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INTRODUCTION

Assessment of learning is not one-time movement, it is a progressing process. It includes the procedure of checking on, reflecting and modifying the learning techniques in an arranged and cautious way. When assessment is carried out in classroom in an ongoing or continual way by the teacher it is called continuous assessment (Prouty & George, 2003). In this process, observations are made time to time to collect data to determine the level of students' knowledge, understanding and performance. It is done by giving particular tasks to students based on their previous achievement in classroom. Teacher observes the activities of students to decide about the level of their performance in class. It also helps them to find out what the learners have learnt. Continuous assessment is part and parcel of instructional process that has to be taken as a key tool in educational quality assurance endeavor (Abejehu, 2016).

Airasian (1991) reported that continuous assessment as an approach should present the complete number of sources and methods that teacher can apply to collect, interpret and synthesize information about students. The use of his information also helps teachers

to understand their students, plan and monitor their teaching to create a feasible culture. Baker and Stites (1991) stated that continuous assessment should include a regular assessment of students' affective structures and motivation in which they will need to express their determination intensely, their work force readiness and their skills in team or group performance background.

Literature Review

Nature of continuous assessment in the context of international perspectives concerning teacher assessments is organized under the following subtopics: continuous assessment and curriculum-based assessments: Watkins (2007) explains, in countries that have evidently designed national curriculum, continuing, influential assessment is typically based on aim and attached directly to the aims for the curriculum designed for all the students. National strategies for assessment may define what needs to be assessed and how it is to be assessed. Inside the countries using this method, main features is that developing and applying assessment is

mostly the duty of conventional schools and class teachers. This is according to the purpose of such assessment for notifying decisions about next steps in an individual student's learning (Watkins, 2007).

Purpose of Continuous Assessment is that the teacher can continuously assess student's learning outcomes in all three domains- Cognitive, Affective, psychomotor, particularly with regard to knowledge and understanding, procedural knowledge (making comparisons and estimates performing calculations, applying formulas), problem solving and other higher order skills. Continuous assessment serves the purposes including providing information about the learners status and progress of each student. It helps teacher to know, plan redesign the teaching in accordance with the needs of the students. It provides diagnostic information on strengths and weaknesses of the students' learning. It also provides feedback to the teachers for modification of curriculum targets and text books. It facilitates teachers in grouping of students for learning through various activities, provides criteria of grading and promoting students and counseling to students and their parents. It decides teacher training method for a program, faculty or staff (Gipps, 1990).

As a holistic approach continuous assessment in classroom where majority of the school going students are given an opportunity to appear in school, the skills of students in classroom is increased. Previous tests were used only to choose the best students to promote to next level. But now many countries stress upon the success of each student or continuous assessment is considered a way to certify that all students must have an opportunity to succeed in school. In most of the classrooms the range of intelligence varies from slow to average and to fast learner. By means of continuous assessment, the lecturer/tutor adopts his or her teaching methodology according to the needs of all learners so each of the students has chance to learn and succeed. By frequently observing the aptitudes of the learner that what they know and what they can do, the teacher can make sure the success of every student. Everyone is provided with an opportunity to succeed when it is applied properly (Prouty and George, 2003).

Continuous assessment is beneficial for teachers, learners, educators and parents as being Guidance –Oriented because it involves data collecting for a long period. It yields more correct data which stimulate teachers to modify their teaching methodology. This may play a dynamic role in identifying the remediation areas of student's weakness if correctly secured in what happening in classroom. Learners' performance is assessed properly. Continuous assessment is a tactic that detains the overall pupil's performance. Tutors and authority are responsible to analyze the student's achievement and correct the highlighted problems (Alausa, 2004). In continuous assessment teacher is kept in center for the assessment of all the students' activities arranged in the classroom. It inspires more teachers to take part in assessment and grading of their learners (Paris *et al.*, 1991).

Through the integration of assessment activities into instructional practice, teachers become able to

integrate assessment with their instructional practices. Teachers are likely to incorporate assessment learning framework largely and certainly provide evidence related to how assessment information is applied to inform and guide in the selection of teaching methodology for individual learner. In the view of Lewis, with the help of continuous assessment teacher must take help from assessment in their teaching, and teacher must discuss criteria for good learners' work with colleagues and parents. Lewis (1997) stated more that all students must have an opportunity to succeed in school.

Statement of the Problem

Over the years, there have been massive failure of students in continuous assessment in tertiary institutions generally. These poor performances led to less students graduating with First Class and Second Class Upper degrees. This study focused on investigating the potency of continuous assessment on academic excellence of students in Federal University Wukari, Taraba State with a view to proffering solutions towards ameliorating the situation for improved academic excellence in the areas of Agriculture, Science. Social science, Medicine and Law.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of the study is to investigate the potency of continuous assessment in promoting academic excellence among students of Federal University Wukari. However, the specific objectives are to:

1. find out the potency of continuous assessment on academic achievement of school students in various faculties.
2. explore the effect of continuous assessment on the retaining level of top scorers in Sciences, Social sciences, Agriculture, Medicine and Law.
3. highlight the impact of continuous assessment on the retaining level of low scorers in Sciences, Social sciences, Agriculture, Medicine and Law.

Research Questions

The following were the research questions undertaken in the study:

1. What is the potency of continuous assessment on academic achievement of school students in various faculties?
2. How can one explore the effect of continuous assessment on the retaining level of top scorers in Sciences, Social sciences, Agriculture, Medicine and Law?
3. How can one highlight the impact of continuous assessment on the retaining level of low scorers in Sciences, Social sciences, Agriculture, Medicine and Law?

Method and Procedure

The experimental design, post-test only, was used for the study. The students of Federal University Wukari were the population of the study. Sample consisted of 60 students across various faculties and departments. Sampling was done keeping in view the results of students in GST and their respective department's annual examinations which was conducted, marked and assessed. One section out of two were selected for the study. The rationale behind the selection of one full section was that researchers wanted to make a comparison between the achievements of experimental and control groups. If all students were selected from all the sections that were taught by different tutors, then the effect of different teaching methodology would be a confusing variable. To avoid this confusion, both the experimental and control groups were selected. The study population consisted of sixty students. The students were

divided into two groups, i.e. experimental group and control group. The groups of students in the experimental section were equated on the basis of scores of students in the control group. Four teachers of equal academic qualification (M.A., MSc Ed, MSc, and M.Ed.) and considerably equal experience were selected and assigned to control and experimental groups randomly. Achievement test and questionnaire were used as instruments for collection of data. Pilot testing was conducted before collection of data. A panel of four experienced teachers validated the test prior to conducting the post test. The data were analyzed with the help of SPSS.

Data Analysis and Result Interpretation

Independent sample *t*-test was used to compare mean scores of experiment and of control group. The data analysis has been presented as follows:

Table 1: *Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups on Post-test Scores of FUW Students*

Groups	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Experimental Group	30	59.6	10.81			
Control Group	30	46.1	12.03	2.953	4.572	0.000

$\alpha = 0.001$

Table 1 shows that the value of *t* (58) =4.572. *p*=0.000 is significant at

$\alpha = 0.001$. This means that mean scores of experimental group (M=59.60), SD=10.807) are

significantly different from mean scores of control group (M=46.10, SD=12.02) of the same students in FUW

Table 2: *Comparison of Academic excellence of Experimental and Control Groups on Post-test Scores*

Groups	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Excellent performers of Experimental Group	15	67	9.18			
Excellent performers of control Group	15	56.2	6.25	2.871	3.762	0.001

$\alpha = 0.001$

Table 2 indicates that the value of *t* (28) =3.762. *p*=0.000 is significant at $\alpha = 0.001$. This means that mean score of Excellent performers of experimental group

(M=67), SD=9.18) is different from mean score of high achievers of control group (M=56.2, SD=6.25).

Table 3: *Comparison of Low performers of Experimental and Control Groups on Post-test of FUW Students*

Groups	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i> -value
Low performers of Experimental Group	15	51.73	6.974			
Low performers of control Group	15	36	6.492	2.46	6.395	0.000

$\alpha = 0.001$

Table 3 reveals that the value of $t(28) = 6.395$, $p = 0.000$ is significant at $\alpha = 0.001$. This means that mean score of low performers of experimental group ($M = 51.73$, $SD = 6.97$) is different from mean score of low performers of control group ($M = 36$, $SD = 6.49$).

FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of the data, the following findings were made:

1. It is found that continuous assessment is very potent on the academic excellence of experimental group.
2. It is therefore inferred that continuous assessment had significant effect on the academic excellence of high performers of experimental group.
3. It is also revealed that continuous assessment had significant impact on the achievement of low performers of experimental group.

DISCUSSION

The experiment revealed that continuous assessment has positive effect on students' learning and academic excellence. Significantly, excellent performance of experimental group in the subject of agriculture, sciences, Social Sciences, Medicine and law shows that Continuous assessment does affect the students' academic excellence. This concept has also been discussed in a previous study done by Abejehu (2016) in which he discussed that continuous assessment affects secondary school students' performance in WAEC and NECO Examinations. Another researcher Nxumalo (2007) supports the finding of this study as also emphasized on the importance of continuous assessment as means of informing educators and learners about the learner's progress which would ultimately benefit the learning process. Baker (2010) also discussed this method as an alternative assessment method which was initially used in education systems in 1991 and after continuous reforms, it evolved into continuous assessment.

The study further reveals that the excellent performers and the low performers of experimental group showed significantly better performance as compared to the high performers and the low performers of the control group. The difference between the means of the low performers of both the groups is greater than the mean difference between the high performers of both the groups. It means that the low performers were benefitted more from this approach. This finding is also supported by a study conducted by Bayo (2005) who was of the view that continuous assessment has the potency to motivating and focusing learner's attention on the lesson. As a result, students with learning issues like lack of focus and motivation can be benefitted from this method. It highlights that if the teachers use continuous assessment

in teachings, all the students have chance to learn and succeed. Almost similar conclusion has been drawn in number of researches. As cited by Inyang Abia (2004), continuous assessment plays the most significant role in students' effective performance. Continuous assessment motivates all learners for active participation in learning process. It also provides constructive and rapid feedback to all students. Significantly better performance of low performers of experimental group on retention test is its evidence.

The responses of the students of experimental group revealed their liking of this approach. They opined that continuous assessment techniques promote better understanding of the content and it develops confidence and self-evaluation attributes. This finding closely correlates with a study conducted by Frederickson (1992) in which he emphasized the importance of assessment as a means of developing self-confidence of students. Students get insight into misconceptions and proceed at their own speed. The difference between the means of the high achievers and low achievers of both the groups on retention test is greater than the difference between means on post-test. It indicates that both the high and the low performers of the experimental group better understand the concepts been taught by lecturers than the control group. This is the evidence that continuous assessment focuses on students understanding rather than memorization. The findings of present study are same as those of James and Folorunso (2012) who conducted a study in Nigeria and found a significant effect of treatment on students' achievement in mathematics.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that continuous assessment had critical potency and or role to play on academic excellence of students in FUW. One can draw a curtain that the treatment of continuous assessment had significant impact on academic excellence of high achievers at various stages of learning across various faculties and departments in FUW. Similarly, the treatment of continuous assessment had significant impact on academic excellence of students even among the low performers across levels, faculties and departments in FUW.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made on ways to improve the situation.

- The findings of the study reveal that continuous assessment techniques are very effective in promoting academic excellence. It is therefore recommended that lecturers should be given training in using continuous assessments in teaching.

- This approach of continuous assessment should be enhanced at all levels of education for teaching all subjects.
- Practical training in using continuous assessment should be provided to lecturers. For this, appropriate guidance should be provided to all lecturers at every institution of higher learning.
- Teachers who are well versed in evaluation and assessment techniques should be encouraged and their expertise should be utilized for the said purpose.
- Workshops should be conducted to provide practical training in using continuous assessments
- In-service lecturers should be given training in developing and using continuous assessments through refresher courses. There is the need to develop a new culture for enhancing continuous assessment in teaching.
- Further researches should be conducted to assess the role of continuous assessment in teaching different subjects at different levels of education.

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