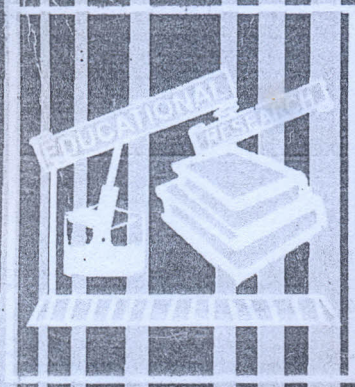


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# Effects of Two Assessment Methods on Learning Outcomes of Pupils in Social Studies: A Case Study of University of Ibadan Staff School

Okwilagwe, E. A.

## Abstract

*This study sought to determine experimentally the relative effects of two methods of assessment on learning outcomes of pupils in social studies at the primary School level. As distinct from what is currently obtaining in most schools in Nigeria, the study discussed the development of Continuous Assessment in Nigeria, laying emphasis on the importance and the essence of using the three domains of this method of assessment in evaluation of pupils' work. Using 60 Primary 3 pupils of staff school, University of Ibadan, who were randomly selected and assigned to treatment and control groups, they were exposed to four-weeks of teaching during which cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains were assessed. The findings of the study did not seem to lend support to the superiority of any of the methods over the other in terms of facilitating students' performance. Also, the findings revealed that when pupils of this age level, are exposed to continuous assessment procedures, they develop positive attitudes to school, while their attitudes toward social studies as a school subject may not necessarily appreciate. However, the experimental subjects seemed to have done better on the psychomotor tests as they improved considerably in writing and drawing during the period, than their counterparts.*

## Introduction

The teaching-learning process at any point in time is all embracing. There are the learning objectives, the inputs or the learning materials and methods; and lastly, the desirable learning outcomes or achievements which complete the circle. These three phases of the teaching-learning process are not in isolation of each other, rather they are interwoven and interrelated in such a way that well stated objectives give rise to well developed learning materials and appropriate methods which in turn generate the desired outcome. Similarly, the feedback that is received from students' assessment at the end of any learning situation are invaluable in bringing about modification in the other two phases aforementioned. Explaining the purpose of conducting assessment, Willis (1993) reiterates that assessment information is designed to tell a teacher something about learning. Crooks (1988) and Duze (1989) also hold similar views when they argued that assessment forms an intergral part of the learning process.

The development of favourable attitudes is a crucial element in the learning of any school subject. Such attitudes can be realized to a large extent within the four walls of a school by fostering in students early interests in schooling and in the learning that goes on there. Scholars such as Okpala and Onocha (1985), Jonathan-Ibeagha (1986) would seem to agree with this contention as they are in consensus that favourable attitudes are a sine-qua-non to learning. Since these attitudes are not learnt in a vacuum, their development have been found to be the product of early socialization process (Price, Price and Williams 1998; Redding, 1992); and once acquired, can be maintained (Price, Price and Williams 1998).

Psychomotor skills are attributes that are considered essential in learning that should be fostered in children early in life. In spite of the importance of these motor skills in the economy of a nation, Ohuche (1988) contend that they are most grossly underplayed in the Nigerian Educational system.

It is not an exaggeration to say, therefore, that the quality of the learning outcome of any learning situation depends largely on the method used in assessing the learning experiences. It should be stressed that well stated objectives and structured learning materials which are excellently executed could be marred by poor assessment procedures. In clear awareness of this fact, the Federal Government of Nigeria made a bold move in 1977 to adopt continuous assessment as a means of evaluating students' achievement in the country as clearly specified in the National Policy on Education (1977) and revised in 1981 and 1985 respectively. The take off of the continuous assessment process from the first rung of our educational system is succinctly spelt out in paragraph 23(2) of the National Policy on Education (1981, 1985). It states that:

the first school leaving certificate will ultimately be abolished and



primary school leaving certificate will be issued by the Headmasters of individual schools and will be based on continuous assessment of pupils and not on the results of a single final examination.

The Conventional Method (C.M.) of assessing students' performance in Nigerian schools (a legacy of the colonial education), was based on the 'one-time-shot' summative examination, that was conducted basically at the end of term or end of year. These examinations, were either conducted internally by the schools or externally by the West African Examination Council. The adoption of continuous assessment in Nigeria stems from what has been described as the weaknesses of the philosophy underling the 'one-time shot' assessment method, inaccurate and misleading decisions based on the results often made by the external assessors; and anxiety producing effects which led students to resort to cramming or engaging in examination malpractices. These problems and weaknesses of the 'one-time shot' examination are succinctly discussed by some scholars such as Ogunniyi (1984) and Ohuche (1983) who see it as being riddled with loopholes, and therefore, inappropriate as a system of assessment in the country. Furthermore, Ezewu and Okoye (1982) assert that the conventional practice of assessment prevents a meaningful growth of the individual child and of the overall educational system especially when it is realized that assessments are validations of the teacher's classroom actions and the learning that takes place in the classroom.

The Conventional Method (C.M.) of assessment was, also, narrowly conceived in terms of behavioural objectives coverage as it concentrated mainly on the cognitive domain to the neglect of the other domains. These and many other weaknesses of the old system of assessment made the Federal Government to adopt continuous assessment method with its provision in the NPE (1985) as a better method of assessing students' performance. At this juncture, it is pertinent to look at what continuous assessment is. The word assess means placing a value on a thing, while in education, the word means:

...to determine the extent of the performance of a student in a unit of instruction or the overall progress of a student in school up to a particular point in time. Ezewu and Okoye (1982:5).

Continuous Assessment or (C.A.) has been looked at by various scholars who have tried to give it a justifiable definition. The Federal Ministry of Education (1985) views the term as:

A mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour systematically takes account of all his performances during given period of schooling ..for the purpose of guiding and improving the learning and performance of the students.

Ogunniyi (1984), sees Continuous Assessment as:

A formative evaluation procedure concerned with finding out in a systematic manner the over-all gains that a student has made in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills after a given set of learning experiences.

The views of Ezewu and Okoye (1983), on the subject of continuous assessment within the educational context is congruent with the aforementioned. These definitions and others such as Duze (1989), Yoloye (1984) and Bajah (1983) reveal a consensus on the basic characteristics of continuous assessment which are that it is objective, systematic, comprehensive, cumulative, diagnostic, and guidance oriented. It is also formative and psychologically motivating; and according to Fakunle (1986), it provides students with feed-back on their performance, thereby relieving their anxieties; and so, they strive to do better.

With respect to the comprehensive nature of continuous assessment, the Federal Ministry of Education (1985) clearly spelt out the three areas that assessment in schools should embrace. These are the cognitive, the affective and psychomotor. Assessment in the cognitive domain should cover the six cognitive domains originally identified by Bloom (1956). These are knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. However, at the lower level of primary education, this should cover the first two levels only (Federal Government Handbook on Continuous Assessment, 1985:10). The affective domain has to do with the values, belief, attitudes and appreciation, interest, social relations, emotional adjustments, habits and life style. The psychomotor domain deals with the way pupils manipulate objects and move their hands and bodies. This is observable in such activities as writing, drawing and setting up laboratory equipments.

The contention of some scholars is that, since these domains overlap, their accurate assessment would depend largely on teachers stating clearly their instructional objectives and procedures in such a way that will bring a change in students' learning outcomes in the three domains (Duze 1989; Ezewu and Okoye 1982). That being as it may, there is little empirical evidence to validate the effectiveness or the superiority of C.A. as an assessment technique in the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. However, among the few that have been done, the results have not been quite encouraging in terms of charting a definite trend. For instance, the study by Okpala and Onocha (1990), in which 64 secondary school teachers who were on a long vacation Mathematics-Science programme were used, found that although differences in performance of the teachers in experimental and control groups tended to be minimal in Mathematics, followed by Physics, Chemistry and Biology, those teachers who were exposed to systematic assessment procedures performed significantly better than those not exposed to these procedures. Fakunle (1986), investigated the differential effectiveness of C.A., positive reinforcement, and achievement

feedback on attending behaviour and academic achievement of students in an open school. He found that achievement feedback was the most superior and C.A. the least superior, but C.A. was superior to both positive reinforcement and achievement feedback in lowering anxiety level of the subjects.

In total disenchantment with the weaknesses of the 'one-time short' assessment method, Ogunniyi (1984) and the Federal Ministry of Education (1985) clearly expressed the need for a more comprehensive procedure that would provide an overall picture of students' performance as indicated in the National Policy on Education. However, in a later study, Emeke (1995) revealed that continuous assessment method was carried out more in rural than urban schools in Oyo State, while more than 50% did not test their students regularly. One interesting finding of the study was that teachers did not test the three domains of learning as stipulated by the National Policy on Education.

In spite of the importance that Continuous Assessment process is supposed to assume in our schools, few empirical studies have been conducted to determine its evaluative effectiveness as a method of assessment. Most write-ups on the subject have been directed mainly towards methods and procedures of implementing it (Ezewu and Okoye, 1982; Ogunniyi, 1984; Duze, 1989) to mention just a few, while others have evaluated its status and level of practise in some states of the Federation (Emeke, 1995; Obiako, 1988). In addition, the findings revealed by Obiako (1988) and Emeke (1995), cast serious doubts on the proper implementation of the C.A. process in Nigerian schools. These studies also, engendered the need for the present study to create adequate awareness and the desirability for proper implementation of C.A. especially at the lower level of education in Nigeria. It is hoped that this awareness will spillover to the intermediate level of education in the country.

It is against this background, and in answer to Ekuri (1990) who made an earnest plea for more empirical researches to be done in the area and as a fall-out of Obiako (1998) and Emeke (1995), that the present study was done. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of continuous assessment as a comprehensive method of assessing the learning outcomes of pupils at the primary level of education in the country.

**Statement of the Problem:** This study examined the effects of two methods of assessment - C.A. and C.M. - on pupils learning outcomes in social studies at the primary school level, thus, examining the effectiveness of one method of assessment over the other.

## Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

1. There will not be any significant difference between the achievement of

subjects exposed to continuous assessment methods and those not exposed to it.

2. There will not be any significant difference between continuous assessment and conventional method as effective methods of assessing pupils' achievement as shown by their gain scores.
3. There will not be any significant difference in the attitudes of subjects exposed to C.A. and those not exposed to it.
4. There will not be any significant difference in psychomotor development of subjects exposed to C.A. and those not exposed to it.

## **Methods**

**The Research Design** - The Pre-test-Post- test Experimental research design was used.

**The population:** These are the primary three pupils in staff school, University of Ibadan. These pupils were chosen because they were not being prepared for any external examination. Secondly, this was their third year of being exposed to social studies curriculum.

**The Subject:** The subjects consist of two arms of primary three pupils of staff school, University of Ibadan. The simple random sampling procedure was used to select the pupils into the two groups. At the start of the study a total of 76 pupils were used because it was not possible to eliminate some members of the classes used as there was no other class to accommodate them and in any case they could disturb the teaching if left in the corridor or behind the class. As such intact classes were used. However, 60 pupils (30 boys and 30 girls) who completed the achievement tests, 50 for the attitude scale and 42 for the psychomotor tests were selected on the basis of full participation in all the treatment sessions to form the sample for the study. Treatment was also randomly assigned to the two groups. The mean age of the students were 7.6 for boys and 7.4 for girls.

**The Instruments:** Three types of instrument were used to gather data. These were:

- (i) Two teacher made social studies achievement tests (TMSSAT) and two formative tests;
- (ii) Attitude to school and social studies scale (ATSASS), and
- (iii) Psychomotor test on drawing and writing (PTDW)

The achievement tests used in this study were two equivalent "Teacher-made social studies achievement tests" (TMSSAT) which were used for the pre-test and for post-test respectively. They each consisted of 18 multiple choice objective items, and 7

true or false objective items bringing the total number of items to 25. The tests were developed by this researcher using a table of specification. These tests sampled the pupils behaviour in the first two levels of behavioural objectives of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives, mainly because the Federal Ministry of Education (1984) seems to suggest this.

To ensure the content validity of the tests, in terms of content matter coverage and behavioural objective assessed, the items were based on the subject matter content the pupils were exposed to during the teaching phase of the experiment. The TMSSAT were then subjected to thorough scrutiny by a 2-man panel, made up of one specialist in the area of educational evaluation and a social studies specialist at the primary school level. Furthermore, they were given to a social studies specialist in Teacher Education Department, University of Ibadan to ensure content and face validity. Their suggestions were used to modify, for instance, the language difficulty of the test items. Two mid-achievement tests were used as formative tests to test pupils' achievement after teaching each topic.

The attitude to school and social (ATSASS) was used to gather information on pupils attitude. It was divided into two parts and consisted of 10 items, which measured pupils' attitude to school and social studies respectively. This was validated by two evaluation experts who gave useful suggestions that helped in restructuring the questions asked. The response format adopted was a 3-point Likert-scale type of 'agree', 'not sure' and 'disagree'. ATSASS was used both for the pre and post attitude tests. The psychomotor test on handwriting was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = poor to 5 = excellent. It was adapted from the "Handwriting Scale" used in California Achievement Tests by McGraw Hill 1957 in Mehrens and Lehmann (1978:358). The Psychomotor Drawing Tests was designed by this researcher and it consisted of basic steps to achieving a true resemblance of an original object or person as the case may be. It was rated on a 6-point scale of 0 = poor to 5 = Excellent.

The psychometric properties for these instruments were established as follows: the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 was used to compute the internal consistency of the achievement tests and a reliability of 0.72 and 0.92 were obtained respectively. The Pearsons Product Moment correlation calculated for the pre and post attitude scores yielded a reliability of 0.99 while the concurrent validity by correlating the post attitude scores and post achievement scores for the experimental group was 0.57.

**Procedure/Treatment Session:** The learning materials was based on the social studies module for primary three. They were "cooperation" and "leadership" The two topics taught were broken down into 6 teaching units. Each topic was taught within 3 periods of 45 minutes each per week. General and specific objectives were

clearly stated. The psychomotor task was taught in 2 lesson period of 30 minutes each. The test in this domain was a practical one as objective type of questions on drawing and writing for pupils of this age bracket would not bring out the desired outcome. The study lasted approximately four weeks.

The experimental group was given two C.A. formative tests based on the content area taught and measured behavioural objectives in the cognitive domain and one formative test was given in the psychomotor domain. The affective domain was measured before and after the treatment using the appropriate instrument constructed by the researcher.

The control group was not given any treatment (formative tests) because the conventional method of assessment was used and it does not take cognisance of what C.A. stands for. However, because the pupils were randomised, they were kept busy with individual exercises on drawing and writing without teacher instruction. These acted as placebos. Both groups were given the pre-test, learning material and post-test.

### Data Analysis and Results

Four hypotheses were stated in this study. To test these, the mean scores and standard deviations of the experimental and control groups were computed, and the t-test for significance between two means was used. These hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

To answer the first research hypothesis, the pre and post achievement scores for the two groups were compared. Table I shows the summary of the results obtained.

**Table 1: Summary of Mean Scores, Standard Deviations of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for the Groups**

		Treatment	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	S <sup>2</sup>	t-value	Cr-value	df	Remark
PRE-TEST	Experimental	C.A.	30	7.97	3.1	9.48	0.146	2.000	58	NS
	Control	C.M.	30	7.83	4.3	18.63				
POST-TEST	Experimental	C.A.	30	13.6	4.85	23.49	1.264	2.00	58	NS
	Control	C.M.	30	12.5	5.10	25.91				

NS = Not significant ( $P > 0.05$ )

The results in Table 1 show that the pre-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups are  $\bar{X} = 7.97$  and  $\bar{X} = 7.83$  respectively. Furthermore, the result shows

that the mean difference between the two groups was not significant ( $t = 0.146$ ,  $df = 58$ ,  $P = NS$ ). This shows that both groups were comparable before the treatment as shown by their performance- mean scores.

The results in Table 1 further indicate that the experimental group had a higher post test mean score  $X = 13.6$  as against  $X = 12.5$  for the control group. This suggests a higher achievement as a result of the treatment given. The spread of scores were widely distributed among the two groups. However, the result, shows that there was no significant mean difference between the two groups ( $t = 1.264$ ,  $df = 58$ ,  $P = NS$ ).

To test the second research hypothesis, the achievement of the subjects in terms of their gain scores was compared. The mean and standard deviation were computed and presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary of mean scores, (Gain Scores) and standard Deviations of Pre and post-Test Scores for the Two Groups**

	Treatment	N	$\bar{X}$	Mean diff.	S.D.	$S^2$	t-value	Cr-value	df	Remark
Experimental	C.A	30	6.23		4.23	18.22				
				0.96			0.94	2.000	58	NS
Control	C.M	30	5.27		3.63	13.22				

Ns = Not significant  $P < 0.5$

The result in Table 2 shows that the mean gain of the experimental and control groups were  $X = 6.23$  and  $X = 5.27$  respectively. It also shows that there was a mean difference of 0.96 of the experimental group over and above that of the control. The results show that the gain scores between the two groups was not statistically significant ( $t = 0.94$ ,  $df = 58$ ,  $P = NS$ ).

The results of the third hypothesis, are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of the subjects' attitude towards school and Social studies before commencement of treatment.

**Table 3: Comparison of Mean Scores on the Pre-Attitude Towards School and Social Studies of Experiment and Control Groups**

Scale	Concept	No of items	Mean Score		S.D.	t-value	P
Sub I	Attitude towards School	4	Exp.	9.12	2.05	0.48	NS
			Control	9.58	2.46		
Sub II	Attitude towards Social studies	6	Exp.	13.36	3.21	1.4	NS
			Control	13.64	4.40		

NS = Not Significant ( $P > 0.05$ )

The results shows that for sub-scale I (attitude towards school), the experimental group had a mean score of  $\bar{X}$  9.12 while the control group had  $\bar{X}$  = 9.88 and the difference between these means was not significant. ( $t = 0.48$ ,  $df = 48$ ,  $P = NS$ ). Similarly, as can be seen from Table 3, results on sub-scale II (attitude towards social studies) show that the experimental group had a mean score  $\bar{X}$  = 13.36 while the control group had a mean score of  $\bar{X}$  = 13.64. This mean difference was not significant. ( $t = 1.4$ ,  $df = 48$ ,  $P = NS$ )

**Table 4: Comparison of mean scores on the Post-Attitude Towards School and Social Studies of Experimental and Control Groups**

Scale	Concept	No of items	Mean Score		S.D.	t-value	P
Sub I	Attitude towards school	4	Exp	9.64	2.35	2.10	*
			Control	9.20	2.50		
Sub 2	Attitude towards Social studies	6	Exp.	12.64	3.98	-1.06	NS
			Control	13.8	3.61		

\*Significant at  $P > 0.05$  level

Table 4 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the subjects' attitudes towards school and to social studies. The results show that for sub-scale I, (attitude towards school), the difference between the mean scores of the groups was significant ( $t = 2.10$ ,  $df = 48$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) The result on sub-scale II (attitude towards social studies) shows that the difference between the mean scores of the group was not significant ( $t = -1.06$ ,  $df = 48$ ,  $P = NS$ ).

**Table 5: Comparison of mean scores and Standard Deviations in Psychomotor Tests of Experimental and Control Groups**

Skills	Mean score		S.D.	t-value	P
Writing	Exp.	2.52	0.79	2.10	*
	Control	1.71	0.45		
Drawing	Exp.	2.10	0.92	5.47	*
	Control	0.67	0.78		

\*Significant at  $P < 0.05$  level

Table 5 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the subjects in the psychomotor tasks of writing and drawing. It shows that for the writing skills, the



experimental group had a higher mean score  $\bar{X} = 2.52$  than the control group  $\bar{X} = 1.71$ . This observed difference was statistically significant ( $t = 2.1$ ,  $df = 40$ ,  $P < .05$ ). Similarly, it can be seen from Table 5 that for the drawing skills, the experimental group had a higher mean score  $X = 2.10$  than the control group  $X = 0.67$ . This difference in the mean was statistically significant ( $t = 5.47$ ,  $df = 40$ ,  $P < .05$ ).

## Discussion

One main finding of this study is that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of pupils in social studies when systematically assessed by the Continuous Assessment (C.A.) method and the Conventional method (C.M.), respectively.

The lack of difference observed in this study tends to show that Continuous Assessment (C.A.) is not superior to the Conventional Method (C.M.) as a method of assessing pupils' performance. The implication of this result is that the findings in this is different from the findings of other scholars such as Okpala and Onocha (1990) who showed that students perform better when they are systematically assessed. The superiority of the C.A. method over and above the C.M. method of assessment as observed by these scholars may have been due to the use of mature subjects in their study. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in achievement of pupils exposed to continuous assessment and the conventional methods of assessment was therefore not rejected.

Indications from the findings of the second hypothesis were not different from the first. Therefore, this hypothesis, was not rejected. The inability of continuous assessment to considerably affect pupils' performance in this study could be attributed to a number of reasons. Firstly, is the fact that the school scheduled its general continuous assessment to fall within the time the study was conducted. This could have made the control group to achieve as the experimental group. Secondly, there is keen competition among the subjects used in the school because the majority of them come mostly from middle and high socio-economic background, whose literate parents usually organise extra-lessons for them after school hours.

The findings with respect to the attitude of subjects exposed to continuous assessment technique show, after the study, that they had acquired better attitudes toward school while there was no appreciable change in attitude to social studies by both groups after the study. By implications, indications from the findings in this study revealed that these groups of pupils were positively disposed to social study as a school subject prior to and after the study. However, the findings in respect of positive attitude development as observed in this study tend to lend credence to the fact that continuous assessment procedure is a tool for improving affective development in learners. It thus supports previous studies as Okpala and Onocha

(1985) and Price *et al* (1998) who contend that positive attitudes once acquired can be maintained.

The findings on the development of the psychomotor skills in writing and drawing also showed that when pupils are systematically assessed there is an improvement in their psychomotor skills, a process that the control group was not privileged to experience. The implications of this finding is that the subjects exposed to continuous assessment procedure tended to exhibit frequent and better psychomotor skills than their counterparts. Consequently, Practising social studies teachers should endeavour to foster in their pupils proper motor skills through proper statement of objectives; and presentation of learning materials with their associated diagrams in good and legible handwriting when writing chalkboard summaries. Also, pupils should be given continuous practice at these skills at the primary school level until they attain mastery level. Similarly, implementers of educational policies should as a matter of urgency and duty ensure that teachers comply with policy matters if they are to achieve more valid assessment of pupil's overall ability and performance, and the participation of teachers in the overall assessment of their pupils.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The result of this study indicate that when students are assessed by Continuous Assessment (C.A.) or Conventional Method (C.M.), they achieve equally well academically. The subjects exposed to Continuous Assessment developed favourable attitudes to school than to social studies as a subject. However, the psychomotor skills of the experimental group were significantly better than those of the control group.

This researcher recommends that further investigation be carried out on the use of continuous assessment as an assessment technique using pupils from the public schools so as to further determine its superiority as a better assessment technique over the C.M. Also, more subjects should be used so as to be able to make valid generalizations about the population.

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