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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND MATHEMATICS IN IBADAN

OGUNDOKUN, M.O.

and

OGUNDELE, T.O

Department of Guidance and Counselling,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of continuous assessment on academic performance of students in English language and Mathematics in secondary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey research that utilized an ex-post facto design to collect secondary data of 840 students used for this study. Four hypotheses were tested for and analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and t-test for independent samples analysis tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis showed that there were positive significant relationship between continuous assessment and academic performance in English language and Mathematics. Government, school administration and teachers should ensure effective implementation and practice of continuous assessment to improve on students' performance. Parents and the students should also respond positively to the feedback given by continuous assessment to enhance its remediation as well as teacher dwelling on its outcome to adjust the teaching and learning process. The government should also improve on the conditions of teaching and learning in the public secondary schools.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary Nigeria, greater emphasis is placed on English language and Mathematics as core subjects required in the combination with other subjects for admission into tertiary institutions. It is disheartening to note that despite the importance of their subjects, students' poor performance in English language and Mathematics has continued unabated and it is nothing to write home about (Adeoye & Emeke, 2010). Poor academic performance is a performance that is adjudged by the examinee/testee and some other significant others as falling below an expected standard (Aremu & Sokan, 2003). The poor academic performance in English

language and Mathematics in most cases hinders students from gaining admission into the tertiary institutions. This could have negative effect on the students' interpersonal relationships; it could also make students to dropout from school, join bad group, develop inferiority complex and other self defeating tendencies that are unproductive in the contemporary society.

Aremu (2000) also affirms that the trend is not only frustrating to the students and the parents; its effect is equally grave on the society in terms of dearth of manpower in all spheres of the economy and politics. Adeoye and Emeke (2010) also consent to the fact that the poor state of student's in the last decade in West African Examinations School Certificate Examination (WASCE) and the National Examination Council (NECO) is quite unfortunate and disturbing. Academic performance of students in Nigerian is seriously declining and as such, the education system in Nigeria needs restructuring. This ugly trend is evident in the poor quality of graduates that flood the present Nigeria society. The quality of graduates being produced by the nation's institutions is questionable and subject to re-examination (Soyinka, 1999).

Despite the importance attached to the subjects, and the role plays in admissions into tertiary institutions, a reasonable percentage of students in our secondary schools do not measure up to the expected score of a credit pass in their graduating examinations (Eme and Monday, 2010). An inspection of the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) results in Mathematics and English Language from 2001-2004 shows a high rate of failure in the subjects. The SSCE result in English Language alone, for 2001, 2003 and 2004 showed a failure rate of 67.43%, 52.79% and, 41.82% respectively (West African Examination Council, 2004). These very poor outings have made it increasingly difficult for students to fill admission quota in the different colleges and universities in Nigeria. This is rather uncomplimentary when one considers the extent of investment made in the educational sub-sector by government, teachers, parents and other stakeholders (Eme & Monday, 2010).

In recent time, poor academic performance among secondary school students, evidenced on the rate at which students failed in West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has been a topical issue to all the stakeholders on education in Nigeria, considering the percentage of candidates who passed last year examination. It is

appalling that out of 1,351,557 candidates who sat for May/June 2010 West African Senior School Certificate Examination, (WASSCE), 337,071 candidates representing 24.94 percent obtained credits in English Language, Mathematics and other three subjects. Bearing this comparison, on the number of candidates who passed the 2009's WAEC with 2010's WAEC, one cannot but help conclude that education in Nigeria is seriously losing ground (Wale, 2010). Furthermore, educators have described school achievement status as worrisome since 1987 and particularly in English language and mathematics and other core subjects (Edozie, 2001; Dada, 1987). Scholars and teachers have all along advanced possible causes of low or under-achievement of students in school subjects. Subject teachers have concentrated on diagnosing textbooks used, teachers' method and personality, difficult concepts, curriculum contents, among others as influencing students' performance (Dada, 1987).

However, educational researchers have identified poor motivation, poor study habit, poor attitude, poor adjustment, lack of self concept, among others as possible causes of poor academic performance among secondary school students (Akinboye, 1974; Emeke, 1984; Ezewu 1987; Oheari, 1994). Thus, the problems of secondary school students' performance in English language alone have claimed the attention of many scholars (Adebiyi, 2006; Adebule, 2004; Marburger, 2009; Olaiyoye & Ajileye, 2004; Awotala, 2007; Christopher, 2007; Kolawole & Ajayi, 2000; Mabekoye, 2007; Oladunjoye, 2005). Reporting on the rate of students' failure in core subjects, The researchers attributed the factors responsible to shortage of qualified Mathematics teachers, poor facilities, equipment and instructional materials for effective teaching, use of traditional chalk and talk methods, large number of students to teacher ratio and Mathematics fright/phobia to mention but a few, (Uwadiae, 2005).

This trend makes some people believe that there is a falling standard in education in the country. For instance, Jaiyeoba and Akintepede (2002) believe that there is falling standard in education as seen in students' continuous poor performance in examinations and that the problem is attributable to students' inability to recall what is learnt. Among the painful effects of academic underachievement are stigmatizations, drop out and loss of set goals (Salami, 2001). Gesinde (2004) assert that poor performance in examinations do

have negative effects on the candidates. It is also reported that poor performance in examination contributes significantly to examination malpractice cases that is prevalent in public examinations. It has been suggested that the fear of failure lures candidates into adopting mal-adaptive strategies in examination (Uwadiae, 1997).

It is worthy of note that English Language and Mathematics up till now are compulsory subjects at all levels of education and a credit passes in the two are required for admission into tertiary institutions. Therefore if one weighs the vital role English language and Mathematics plays in the society against the backdrop of the continuously poor performance of students in the subjects, it becomes imperative that further steps need be taken to address the situation. This brings to bear the fact that the utilization of result of school continuous assessment in appraising the strength and weakness of students in secondary schools, desire to be given necessary attention. Continuous assessment according to Okpala, Onocha and Oyedeji (1993) is a system of assessment which is carried out at pre-determined intervals for the purpose of monitoring and improving the overall performance of students and of the teaching/learning environment.

Thus, many studies have emphasized that the practice of continuous assessment has been associated with certain advantages such as; it provides a more representative sampling of students' performance across time than the traditional examination system. It provides a constant stream of information about students' progress; and it is fairer to students; it motivates students to learn as knowledge of results serves as a successful reward; it integrates teaching, learning and assessment; (Akplu, 1986: Alutu & Aluede, 2006). Various scholars have also found continuous assessment to be an effective tool of promoting student achievement (Onuka & Oludipe, 2006, Frempong, 2005, Afolabi, 2005, Adeoye & Okpala, 2005). Also, Anikweze (2005) posits that learner's assessment is the means of knowing what kind of learning has taken place during schooling process and as such can be rightly regarded as a basic demand of school accountability.

Similarly, Cheng and Curtis (2004) observed that continuous assessment can be used to correct or minimize social ills in the allocation of opportunities (Badger & Wilkinson, 1998), as well as to upgrade the performance of academic institutions. Various studies showed that regular and sound classroom assessments have

positive impact on student achievement and well-being, while poor assessment can be detrimental to learning (Trevisan, 2002). Furthermore, continuous assessment provides information for reflecting on teaching effectiveness, appreciation of learners' learning strategies and learning difficulties, design or revision of teaching styles or approaches (Nkechi, 2008). Continuous assessment is important for the purpose of making academic decisions about the students now, or in the future.

Purpose of the study

The present study sought to investigate the relationship between continuous assessment and academic performance among secondary school students in English language and Mathematics. The moderating influence of gender and school type was also part of the investigation.

Hypotheses

Taking into consideration, the set objectives of this study, it was hypothesised that:

1. There is no significant relationship between continuous assessment and academic performance of secondary school students in English language.
2. There is no significant relationship between continuous assessment and academic performance of secondary school students in Mathematics.
3. There is no significant difference in academic performance of science and art inclined secondary school students.
4. There is no significant difference in academic performance of public and private secondary school students.

Method

The design for the study is a descriptive survey research that utilized an ex-post facto type. The target population for the study comprised all Senior Secondary II (SS II) students in Ibadan, Oyo State. The total numbers of 840 students were used for this study. From the list of eleven local governments in Ibadan, 3 local governments were randomly selected by the use of random table number. From the list of secondary schools in each of the local government, seven secondary schools (5 public schools and 2 private schools) were selected from each local government using the table of random

numbers. From each school, 40 students (20 males, 20 females) were randomly selected with the aid of ballot.

Measures

The researcher made use of secondary data. The school record on Continuous Assessment scores and examination scores of the first and second term of Senior Secondary School two (SSII) students were collected to determine the academic performance. Data for the study were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to answer hypothesis 1-2 and t-test for independent samples to answer hypotheses 3-4. Hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results obtained in the analysis of data collected are presented in Tables below.

Table 1: Relationship between continuous assessment and academic performance of secondary school students in English language.

| Variable | Mean | SD | N | r | P | Remark |
|---------------------|-------|------|-----|--------|-------|--------|
| CA English language | 16.62 | 4.23 | 840 | 0.637* | 0.000 | Sig |
| English Examination | 31.29 | 8.82 | | | | |

*Sig. at 0.05

Table 1 shows that a significant positive correlation was found between C.A English and English Examination ($r = 0.637$; $P < 0.05$). It implies that Continuous Assessment and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in English Language are highly and positively related.

Table 2: Relationship between continuous assessment and academic performance of secondary school students in mathematics.

| Variable | Mean | SD | N | r | P | Remark |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-----|--------|-------|--------|
| CA Mathematics | 16.44 | 4.46 | 840 | 0.726* | 0.000 | Sig |
| Mathematics Examination | 31.94 | 10.26 | | | | |

*Sig. at 0.05

Table 2 reveals that a significant positive correlation was found between C.A Mathematics and Mathematics Examination ($r = 0.726$, $P < 0.05$). It implies that Continuous Assessment and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Mathematics are highly and positively related.

Table 3: Difference in the Academic Performance of Art inclined and science inclined secondary school students.

| Academic Performance | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | Crit-t | Cal-t | Df | P |
|----------------------|-----|------|-----------|--------|-------|-----|------|
| Art Students | 420 | 2.25 | 0.47 | 1.96 | 3.33 | 838 | .001 |
| Science Students | 420 | 3.15 | 0.48 | | | | |

Table 3 reveals that there was significant difference in the Academic Performance of Art and science inclined Secondary School Students ($t = 3.33$; $df = 838$; $P < 0.05$). The mean score for the Arts Students is ($X = 2.25$) and for Science Students is ($X = 3.15$). It implies that there is a significant difference in academic performance of Art and Science inclined in English language and Mathematics. Specifically, Science students perform academically better than Art students.

Table 4: Difference in the Academic Performance of Public and Private Secondary School Students.

| Academic Performance | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | Crit-t | Cal-t | Df | P |
|----------------------|-----|------|-----------|--------|-------|-----|------|
| Private School | 240 | 1.96 | 0.29 | 1.96 | 10.24 | 838 | .000 |
| Public School | 600 | 2.30 | 0.48 | | | | |

Table 4 reveals that there was significant difference in the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in the Private and Public Schools ($t = 10.24$, $df = 838$, $P < 0.05$). The mean scores for the private school students is ($X = 1.96$) while mean score for the public school students is ($X = 2.30$). It implies that there is a

significant different in academic performance of public and private secondary school students. Specifically, Public Secondary School Students perform academically better than Private Secondary School Students.

Discussion

The results show that there is a positive significant relationship between continuous assessment and academic performance of secondary school students in English language. This result is consistent with the findings of Hilda, 2011; MacGaw, 2006; George & Cowan, 1999; Adam, 1990) who found that continuous assessment affects the academic performance of students in English language. This indicates that the students who score high in the continuous assessment also score high in the examination, while the students who score low in the continuous assessment also score low in the English language examination. Thus, MacGaw (2006) has earlier infer that assessment helps students to make their own progress; this enables teachers to monitor their students and themselves as well. This is so because continuous assessment is a true measure through which the knowledge, understanding and skills attained by the students could be ascertained.

There is also a positive significant relationship between continuous assessment and academic performance of secondary school students in Mathematics. The result agrees with Chun (2006); Kapambwe (2006); Kamangira (2003); Mchazime (2003); Bell and Cowie (2001); Cromey and Hanson (2000) found that continuous assessment has predictive influence on students' performance. It is a powerful means to improve student learning. The students who score high in the continuous assessment also score high in the Mathematics Examination. The students who score low in the continuous assessment also score low in the Mathematics examination. The possible explanation for this is that the use of continuous assessment in determining students' performance when adequately utilized stimulates learning interest and academic success among students. This could be a predictor of academic performance.

There is also a significant difference in academic performance of science and art students. The students in Science performed

academically better than the students in Arts. The finding supports the previous findings of Aladejana and Aderibigbe (2007); Adeoye and Okpala (2005) that there is high correlation between continuous assessment and academic achievement in arts and science. Continuous assessment plays a vital role in the continuous monitoring of a learner's progress towards the achievement of predetermined outcomes. The possible explanation for this is that the higher performance in Mathematics by science students could be as a result of the fact that they are often exposed to instruction on Further Mathematics which is regarded as advanced Mathematics.

There is a significant difference in continuous assessment and academic performance of private and public secondary school students in English language and Mathematics. This is in consonance with Newhouse and Beegle (2005); Lubiensk (2009) that the public school students perform better than those from the private schools in relation to continuous assessment. This attests to the fact that continuous assessment predicts academic performance in both public and private schools. The possible explanation for this is that Public secondary school students' better performance could be because of more commitment on the part of the teachers, stability and implementation of educational policy, conducive environment for learning, availability of instructional materials, library facilities, computer and other infrastructural facilities as well as exposure to various learning experiences through excursion and field trip.

Implications of the findings for educational practice

Since continuous assessment is found to be a very important factor that determines students' academic performance, the study has implications for the work of the educational psychologists, policy makers, teachers and administrators. They need to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the various interaction involving variables that predict the academic performance of students.

The policy makers should improve on the practice and implementation of continuous assessment. The continuous assessment should be implemented or practice in such a way that it will give feedback to the students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders.

The Teacher should use the feedback given in relation to the performance of the students to judge on their (teacher) performance, style of teaching, methods adopted in teaching and improve on them when necessary.

Positive reaction to feedback on the part of the learner will enhance improvement in academic performance. Students should be made to develop a positive attitude towards English language and Mathematics and never to look at it as an abstract subject but to always remember that they are the foundation stone of any Science, Social Science or Arts and even in their day-to-day activities.

The government should improve the quality of education in the public schools by employing more and qualified teachers, providing environment that is conducive for learning and providing incentives for both teachers to encourage them especially those in rural areas. Therefore, it is worthy of note that continuous assessment should be succinctly utilized sustain its role in enhancing academic achievement irrespective of the students subject orientation.

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