

# IMPACT OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MATHEMATICS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE

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## **Abstract**

*The main purpose of the study was to investigate the Impact of Continuous Assessment on Students' Academic Performance in Mathematics in Secondary Schools in Enugu State. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the students was all mathematics teachers in public secondary schools in Enugu State, out of which a sample size of two hundred and fifty two (252) mathematics teachers were drawn using stratified sampling technique. Data was collected using well-structured questionnaire. The validity of the instrument was done by three experts in Mathematics and Computer Education Department, while Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used to carry out the reliability of the instrument, and the reliability co-efficient obtained was 0.84. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. The findings of the study revealed among others that Continuous assessments were frequently administered in secondary schools in Enugu State and affect the performance of the students. There was a significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in mathematics. It was concluded that continuous assessment has major impact on academic performance of secondary school students in mathematics. It was recommended that mathematics teachers should be educated and encouraged on the need to involve continuous assessment in the teaching process since continuous assessment helps to increase the performance of students in mathematics.*

**Keywords:** Mathematics; Impact; Assessment; Continuous Assessment; Academic Performance; Evaluation; Teachers; Secondary School.

## **Introduction**

Mathematics is a science of magnitude and number as well as the science that sustains the daily practices of man. Alechenu (2012), described mathematics as the “queen” of the sciences without which it would be difficult for people to study other sciences like physics, chemistry, biology and computer science/information technology. Despite its utility, mathematics has been one of the subjects which Nigerian students especially at secondary schools level develop dislike for and likewise achieve poorly (Odili, 2006). Ajogbeje (2012) revealed that one of the key factors which seems to contribute more to the problem of poor students’ achievement in Mathematics is the essence of using test and other evaluation instruments during the instructional process which is to guide, direct and monitor students’ learning and progress towards attainment of course objectives. According to Fajemidagba (2001), effective teaching has three components: preparation, execution and assessment. Preparation phase is the planning stage at which instructional objectives and suitable instructional materials are selected. The planned lesson is actually delivered using relevant instructional strategies at the execution stage. At the assessment stage, the teacher determined the achievement of the intended objectives. From the discussion, it can be deduced that effective teaching cannot be separated from assessment. In other words, assessment and instructional strategies are integral part of teaching and learning process. This is because there is no effective teaching without assessment just like there would not be any assessment without teaching. Johnson (2019) defined assessment as the use of a variety of procedures to collect information about learning and instruction.

The review of the nature of learning and educational practice have led to reappraisal of teaching and learning in schools, so there has been a need for an examination of how these are assessment help in improving the academic performance of students. Adeyemi (2008) view the increasing importance of assessment not only for students, but for the educational system as whole.’ Assessment may be defined as any method used to better understand the current knowledge that a student possesses. This implies that assessment can be as simple as a teacher’s subjective judgment based on a single observation of student performance, or as complex as a five-hour standardized test. The idea of current knowledge implies that what a student knows is always changing and that we can make judgment about student achievement through comparisons over a period of time. Assessment may affect decisions about grades, advancement, placement, instructional needs, and curriculum. Assessment is often seen as serving three purposes for the teacher: measuring attainment, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and indicating progress or deterioration. However, assessment is also one way by which injustice can be avoided in education. The function of a school is the certification of individual learner under its embrace (Idowu &Esere, 2009).To effectively carry out this role, assessment of one kind or the other is a prerequisite. Assessment is a means whereby the teacher obtains information about knowledge gains, behavioural changes and other aspects of the development of learners (Oguneye as cited in Faleye&Adefisoye, 2016). It involves the deliberate effort of the teacher to measure the

effort of the instructional process as well as the overall effort of school learning on the behaviour of students. Assessment covers all aspects of school experience both within and outside the classroom. It covers the cognitive as well as the affective and psychomotor aspects of learning. In Nigeria, educational planners and administrators are now more conscious than ever before of their role in the nationwide scheme of curriculum innovation.

Assessment is a process through which the quality of an individual's work or performance is judged. Assessment of students' level of academic performance is vital to teaching and learning process as it provides the necessary feedback about the outcome of educational goals and objectives. The assessment of learning outcomes provides objective evidences necessary in the decision making process in education. As pointed out by Bassavanthappa (2009), good measurement resulting in accurate data is the foundation of sound decision making about educational endeavor. In education, assessment aims at determining the level of students' mastery of a body of knowledge and skills in a subject (Airasian, 2006). 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 carried out as an on-going process, assessment is known as Continuous Assessment (CA) (Samiullah & Anjum, 2017).

In the past, the educational systems of many African nations were dominated by the one-short summative type of assessment (Alausa, 2005). Students were trained to pass examinations so as to move up the education ladder; in order to stop this, suggestions for a broader approach to assessment, which would be flexible and also provide valid and reliable results were made (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). In the light of this, CA was introduced to find ways in which academic evaluation impacts on the way teaching occurred and learners learnt; hence, the significance of teachers' understanding of relevance of continuous assessment to students' academic success. It is when people know about innovation they are to adopt that they are motivated to embrace its practices. Continuous Assessment is 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 experience. In this process, observations are made time to time to collect data to determine the level of students' knowledge, understanding and performance. CA is done by giving particular tasks to students based on their previous achievement in classroom. CA 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). Samiullah and Anjum (2017) 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 this information also helps teachers to understand their students, plan and monitor their teaching to create a feasible culture. Baker and Stets as cited in Samiullah and Anjum,

(2017) 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.

Continuous assessment (CA) does not solely depend on formal tests. CA is more than giving a test, it involves every decision made by the teacher in class to improve students' achievement. CA may take different forms such as formal questions given to students during class, take-home assignments/exercises and recapitulation exercises. Assessment is either internal or external. Internal assessment refers to school-based assessment, which includes class assignments, teacher-made tests, recap exercises, projects, field studies and all these tools form part of the classroom continuous assessment strategies. External assessment refers to tests that are produced by examining bodies away from school. Continuous assessment strategy refers to the different tools/procedures used in the classroom to understand the academic achievement levels of learners in terms of their knowledge, attitudes and values. One of the most important and significant developments in Nigerian educational system was the introduction of the use of Continuous Assessment in evaluation of students at all levels of schooling. By implication, every teacher from primary to secondary level of education should understand and practice Continuous Assessment.

Continuous assessment is a classroom strategy implemented by teachers to ascertain the knowledge, skills and understanding attained by students at a particular point in time. Teachers administer assessments in a variety of ways in order to observe multiple tasks and information about what students know, understand and can do. The assessments are curriculum based tasks previously taught in classroom. Continuous assessment is a method of evaluation carried out periodically or at a predetermined interval of the school year. It is aimed at finding out how much students have acquired in a subject matter. It is a consistence monitoring of students' progress in school. It involves collecting data with a view to making value judgement about the quality of a person, object, group or event (Ajuonuma, 2007).

The continuous assessment grading system requires the assessment of the change in behaviours, in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The students are evaluated from one stage to the other through tests, assignments, projects and other school activities. Race (2007) stated that continuous assessment is more useful to the students, as it provides them with on-going feedback on their performance, helps them to become more self-critical, and encourages them to attempt mastering material as they actually work through a course, thus, achieving success in their academic goals. According to Adegbeye (2003), CA is more relevant as it allows students to demonstrate their ability and development on a periodical basis, so that students who have studied hard but is not very good at sitting for examinations is not placed at a disadvantage compared with lazy students who engage in minimum amount of work needed to pass

such examinations. A fundamental change in the system of assessment of students' performance has emerged through the formalization of Continuous Assessment as a major component of evaluation process (Idowu & Esere, 2009). The comprehensive nature of continuous assessment is in four folds; firstly, the teacher has to ensure that different assessment techniques are employed at different times in the quest for continuous assessment system. This will take care of whatever inadequacy that could have been accessioned by the students' inability to maximally express their prowess when a particular assessment technique (e.g. test) is used. The comprehensive nature in this strand implies that the teacher will have to conduct series of assessment activities at different stages of teaching and learning in the classroom. Secondly, the comprehensive nature of continuous assessment also demands that the assessment activity of the teacher is expected to cover the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the students' behaviour. This means that the teacher should not narrow assessment activity to issues relating to paper and pencil method of assessing the students' achievement in a subject, but should also extend such subject's assessment to such activities like the use of hand and brain (through the coordination of muscles and bones) to produce things that are observable (Faleye & Afolabi, 2007). The affective activities that can be included in to assessment include class attendance, punctuality, attitude to school work/subject activities, neatness, respect for rules and regulation, cooperation with colleagues, leadership qualities, courage, perseverance compartment, effort at knowing etc. Examples of psychomotor activities include drawing, painting, running jumping, dancing, typing, titration etc.

The third of the characteristics of continuous assessment is its cumulative nature. The cumulative nature of continuous assessment necessitates that the average continuous assessment system of every student in a particular session is carried over to the next class level till the last class of the school level. This is to ensure that the students are not put under the challenge of any teacher who may not be forthright in the administration of continuous assessment for any particular school term. The performance of any student could vary overtime due to some reasons, this can be overcome by the determination of average continuous assessment system of other terms or session since the intention of assessment is not to make students fail but to have a valid basis for the classification of students into various ability levels (Faleye and Afolabi, 2007). The fourth nature of continuous assessment is that it is guidance oriented. It is expected that feedback is obtained after every assessment activity in the school. This feedback is to guide the learner in identifying the areas where the students' needs to try more so as to improve the students' performance. The feedback also serves as 'eye-opener' to the parents or guardians if the concerned students in terms of students' progress in the school. Feedback is an important tool for the sustenance of good performance as well as a veritable instrument for the improvement of poor performance. The teacher is expected to give prompt feedback to students whenever any assessment activity is conducted. If and when the teacher will be unable to give feedback, it is important that students are not given any assessment task because once students discover that the teacher will not mark

the test, assignment or class work given to them, the tendency is for them not to take the teacher serious again. When the students are sure that their teacher will mark any assessment task given to them and report same to them on time, and when they are also made to realize that every assessment task counts, then, they would always want to prepare ahead for any task to be given by the teacher (Faleye&Adefisoye, 2015). If the teacher could not help the students in there are as of weaknesses, the students concerned are expected to be referred to the school counselor for help or even to the parents or guardians for assistance. When these are done, then, continuous assessment is guidance oriented.

On the review of studies carried out in continuous assessment, Kanno (2006) carried out a research work on the relevance of continuous assessment test to students' cognitive development in elementary schools in Ilorin metropolis. Dekaiye (2011) conduct a research on the influence of school population on the implement of continuous assessment in secondary schools in Lokoja metropolis, Kogi State. Yakub (2009) carried out his own study on the problem of continuous assessment implementation in secondary schools in Sokoto State. Few studies were conducted on the impact of continuous assessment to student's academic performance in mathematics in Enugu State. The study therefore examined the impact of continuous assessment on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Enugu State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The importance of mathematics to an individual and society is acknowledged worldwide. Unfortunately, learners' performance in the subject at national examinations at the secondary school level is worrying all over the globe. Performance of mathematics subject in most students in secondary schools in national examination in Nigeria has been very poor. Since the introduction of continuous assessment system by National Policy on Education in early 1980s, there are many challenges associated with its use in practice and implementation. In almost every year during processing of the Secondary Schools examination results, NECO and WAEC have identified an aspect of schools turning in high continuous assessment marks of their students which does not correlate at all with their respective final examination subjects marks. One would wonder why continuous assessment scores do not predict senior school certificate if continuous assessment is effectively conducted. Common to all these studies is the fact that continuous assessment allows for a diagnosis of the learners' learning difficulties. The purpose of continuous assessment is to assist in improving learning through administering of assignments and tests as the learning experiences increase before the end of term examination is taken. As good as the purpose for which continuous assessment was initiated, some teachers and students see the conduct of so many tests as extra work and burden. As a result, the main purpose of continuous assessment is gradually being lost. It is in the light of this the researcher

*Impact Of Continuous Assessment On Students' Academic Performance In Mathematics In Secondary Schools* investigated on the impact of continuous assessment on students' academic performance in mathematics in secondary schools in Enugu State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examined the impact of continuous assessment on students' academic performance in mathematics in secondary schools in Enugu State. Specifically, the study determined;

1. The extent of administering continuous assessment in mathematics in secondary schools
2. The extent to which continuous assessment affect students' academic performance in mathematics in secondary schools

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study

1. To what extent is continuous assessment administered in mathematics in secondary schools
2. To what extent does Continuous Assessment affect students' academic performance in mathematics in secondary schools.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Mathematics.

### **Methodology**

This is discussed under the following subheadings: design of the study, area of the study, population for the study, sample and sampling techniques, instrument for data collection, validation of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

The research design of this study was a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey research design is considered appropriate for use in this study because the sample population is the representative of the entire population and was used for the study. The study was carried out in Enugu State. There are six Education zones in Enugu State. The population comprised of all the mathematics teachers from the 295 secondary schools in Enugu State. The schools in Enugu Education zone having 31 secondary schools, Agbani Education zone having 45 secondary schools, Awgu Education zone having 54 secondary schools, Udi Education zone having 55 secondary schools, Nsukka Education zone having 60 secondary schools and Obollo-Afor Education zone having 50 secondary schools. The sample size of two hundred and fifty two mathematics teachers was drawn through stratified sampling technique. Data was collected using a well-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 23 items divided in three sections. Section A comprised of demographic characteristics of teachers as respondents. Section

B comprised 10 items on frequency of administering continuous assessment, section C comprised 10 items on the extent to which Continuous Assessment affect students' academic performance in mathematics in secondary schools. Records of continuous assessment of students were also used. Sections B and C will have response option of a 4 point scale of SA= Strongly Agree (4 points), A= Agree (3 points), D= Disagree (2 points), SD= Strongly Disagree (1 point).

The validity of an instrument is the degree of accuracy with which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. The instrument was presented to three experts in mathematics and computer education for validation. Necessary modifications were suggested. The items of the instrument were judged on their extent to which it measured what was intended. The education experts critically examined the instrument and made useful suggestions that helped to improve the quality of the instrument. The instrument was first be trial tested using twenty (20) mathematics teachers in private secondary schools in Enugu State, which are not part of the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Model with cluster one yielding 0.85, cluster two yielded 0.89 and the total reliability index of 0.84 was obtained indicating that the instrument was very highly reliable for the study. The completed questionnaires collected by the researcher was analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. Thus Mean of the 4-point response scale was  $(4+3+2+1)/4 = 10/4 = 2.5$ . This implies that the cutoff point is 2.5.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** To what extent is continuous assessment administered in mathematics in secondary schools

**Table 1:** Mean responses to the extent of administering continuous assessment in mathematics in secondary schools.

(N=252).

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	DEC
1	I regularly score students on punctuality at school, personality, behaviour, assignment and test.	2.95	0.91	A
2	I always draw test from the topics that I have taught the students.	3.03	0.88	A
3	I do correction of the continuous assessment with the students.	2.79	1.07	A
4	School management regularly invites parents concerning the performance of their children	2.34	1.10	D
5	I often conduct class test for the students	2.74	0.79	A
6	I have time table for continuous assessment for the students	2.86	1.01	A
7	I regularly give students assignment	2.43	1.08	D
8	I mark and return the students scripts to them to identify areas of weaknesses and strength	2.12	0.98	D

<b>9</b>	I often draw students attention to their performance in continuous assessment	2.43	0.75	D
<b>10</b>	I often give students continuous assessment before terminal examination	3.34	0.91	A
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.73</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>A</b>

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that they often conduct class test for the students and they regularly give students assignment. While majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement that I often draw students' attention to their performance in Continuous Assessment and the school management regularly invites parents concerning the performance of their children From the result of the above it can be established that continuous assessment are frequently administered in senior secondary schools in Enugu State. Although, school management does not regularly invite parents concerning the performance of their children.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does Continuous Assessment affect students' academic performance in mathematics in secondary schools.

**Table 2:** The extent to which Continuous Assessment affect students' academic performance in mathematics in secondary schools  
(N=252)

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	DEC
11	Continuous assessment is a crucial tool for simultaneously improving classroom practice	3.13	0.63	A
12	Continuous assessment is a tool for improving students' performance	2.65	0.83	A
13	Frequent assessment of students' performance has demonstrated to improve student outcomes	2.73	0.45	A
14	Continuous assessments have proved to help students understand the teacher's learning intentions	2.90	0.31	A
15	Continuous assessments does not provide students with opportunities to revise and improve their thinking	2.10	0.56	D
16	Continuous assessment help students monitor their own progress over time	2.72	0.91	A
17	I use assessments frequently which are modified to improve learning outcomes of the students	2.83	0.79	A
18	Continuous assessment tests provide evidence concerning students' achievements, which when interpreted helps the teachers to take measures for further improvements	2.71	0.75	A
19	Continuous assessment tests cannot enhance teaching and learning by providing a more focused application for learners	2.07	0.68	D
20	Continuous assessment is not used to evaluate progress and achievement, assign grades and appraise programs	2.13	0.38	D

21	Frequency formative assessment of progress monitoring has proved to have positive impact on student outcomes	3.21	0.81	A
22	I actively involve students in the process of helping them to develop skills that enable them to learn better	2.77	0.43	A
23	Administering weekly or biweekly assessments in mathematics progress together with instructional recommendations	2.90	0.31	A
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.83</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>A</b>

From table 2, the respondents agreed that continuous assessment have positive impact on students’ outcome in mathematics since it improves students’ performance in mathematics

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Mathematics.

**Table 3:** t-test analysis of the difference between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in mathematics.

Variables	N	Means	SD	DF	t	Level of Sig	Sig of P
Continuous Assessment	252	3.07	0.87	230	2.54	0.05	0.13
Exam Scores		2.89	0.71				

Table 3 shows that the r-calculated (2.54) is greater than critical value (0.13) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Mathematics, is therefore rejected. This implies that there is significant difference between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in Mathematics.

**Discussion**

The findings of the study revealed that continuous assessments are frequently administered in senior secondary schools in Enugu State. Although, school management do not regularly invite parents concerning the performance of their children. This findings agrees with Hooge (2016) who stated that teachers do not involved parents into their children education because they feel most of those parents are illiterate. Assessment is an important element in mathematics teaching and learning. Aina (2010) opines that teacher must regularly assess the effectiveness of the learning experiences which they have organized to enable the students achieve the stated objectives. Abbas (2009) stated that continuous assessment is an ongoing test device which is comprehensive and include the three domains of learning. The result further revealed that senior secondary schools

students in Enugu State improve in their performance using continuous assessment. Despite the fact that the students are not happy to hear the news of conducting continuous assessment from their teachers.

This finding agrees with Taylor and Parsons (2011) who stated that continuous assessment is a better way of assessing student's performance. Test of hypothesis one revealed that, there is significant difference between continuous assessment scores and academic performance of students in mathematics. This findings agrees with Ahukanna, Onu and Ukah (2007) who stated that continuous assessment is of advantageous to the learner because it reveals the ability of the learner early enough to make necessary adjustment for improved performance on the part of the teacher. Alausa (2005) said that continuous assessment is places at the center of all performance assessment activities. Kenni (2011) further affirms that Continuous Assessment is a mechanism whereby the final score of a student in the cognitive, effective and psychomotor domains of leaning systematically takes accounts of all performance during a period of schooling. Aina (2014) agreed that, it could be inferred that there is significant relationship between students' score in continuous assessment and final grade in electromagnetism Physics. Cola (2013) reported a strong correlation between continuous assessment and students' scores in examination and also in student final grade in electromagnetism. Cola concluded that continuous assessment influenced students' performance in physics. This indicates that continuous assessment should be adopted by mathematics teachers in teaching and learning process in order to help reduce the fear and failure of students in mathematics.

### **Conclusion**

It was concluded that the continuous assessment had critical impact on academic performance of secondary school students in mathematics It is also apparent that it has important implications for understanding how students perceive the feedback they obtain from teachers for their learning. Continuous assessment improved students' efficacy and confidence about their ability to do well in academic work. When students become confident in their ability to succeed, they become more involved and learn more. On the other hand, students are more likely to attempt educational tasks when the feedback from learning indicates that they can succeed.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers should be educated and encouraged on the need to involve continuous assessment in their teaching and learning process.
2. Workshops should be conducted to provide practical training in using continuous assessments.

3. The Curriculum Planners and the Government should involve continuous assessment into the school curriculum for developing assessment techniques in our existing educational environment.
4. In-service teachers should be given training in developing and using continuous assessments through refresher courses. It is the need of the day to develop a new culture for enhancing continuous assessment in teaching.
5. Parents should be involved and aware of their children's academic progress and should also be aware of different assessment techniques and help their children in this respect.

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