

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN CLASS ASSIGNMENT

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Abstract

This study deals with the factors affecting students' performance in class assignment in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State. The study was motivated by the need to fulfill the goals of the *National Policy on Education* and the federal government's handbook on continuous assessment- Ten secondary schools were randomly interviewed and 10 and 60 copies of the questionnaires were administered and retrieved from the students and teachers respectively. The results show that children whose parents are literate do better in their assignment than the children of illiterate ones; the implication of not giving assignment at all makes the student lazy. Hardwork and discipline are responsible for students' good performance in assignment. The major factor affecting students' performance in class assignment is lack of interest, which originates from the high level of examination malpractices in our secondary schools. The respondents also stated that what motivates them to do assignment is the fact that assignment helps them to learn. However, it was also discovered that class assignment enhances good study habit and students' interest in class assignment produces positive academic performance-

Introduction

Class assignments are specific tasks given to be completed within a short time. They are usually meant to reinforce a previous lesson or to prepare for a forthcoming one. Class assignments are usually given to students in schools. The school is an institution that is concerned with formal education. This one supposes that as a formal organization, it can enhance learning more effectively than the home. The objective of formal education is to arouse and to develop in the child a certain measure of physical, intellectual and moral states, which are demanded of him by the society. The school serves as the modern institution, which prepares children for membership of the society.

In Durkheim's definition of education, three elements are visible; they are physical, intellectual and moral. Physical element has to do with the psychomotor domain for behaviour. The intellectual element has to do with the cognitive domain and moral element has to do with affective domain of behaviour. It is upon these elements that continuous assessment is based (Ugbezie, 2002).

Igwe (1990) notes that education has the growing qualities of a living organism, and among its permanent attributes is that it is constantly changing in emphasis and at the same time, adapting itself to new demands and new circumstances. Furthermore, education does not only change with time, but is also sensitive to place and time. In fact, the Federal Government of Nigeria in its *National Policy on Education* (1977), amended (1998), emphasized on full integration of individuals into a sound and effective citizens and assures equal educational opportunities for all citizens, handicapping condition notwithstanding (Iseguan and Okwuone, 1994).

The government in agreement with the above nature of education came out with a handbook on continuous assessment (1985:3) which referred to it as:

A mechanism whereby the final grading of student in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour takes account in a systematic way, of all his performances during a given period of schooling. Such an assessment involves the use of a great variety of modes of evaluation for purpose of guiding and improving the learning and **performance** of students.

It can be seen from a glance that continuous assessment is systematic, frequent and takes into account the three domains of the curriculum that is the cognitive, affective and psychomotor, using varied measures including tests and non-test measures. It is by taking all these measures into account that the total picture of the child can emerge for counselling and placement. In carrying out the continuous assessment programme, class assignment is the most influential technique because it covers the assessment of the students in the entire three domains.

Thus, the aim of this research is to find out the effect of class assignment on the overall students' academic performance at senior secondary school examination since assessment of students

performance will not be based on only one short simple examination. If the aim of the federal government handbook on continuous assessment is to be realized, class assignment has to be given its proper place in the teaching-learning process.

Statement of the Problem

Prior to the introduction of continuous assessment, secondary school teachers relied on teacher made-tests, which include class assignments, take home questions, weekly tests, terminal examination and end-of-year promotion examination (Obioma, 1988). Over the years, there has been a notion about class assignment on student's academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools and over non-effective implementation of class assignment programme in our secondary schools.

The highlight of this study is to find out (lie effect of the implementation of class assignment on the over ail student academic performance. Nowadays, teachers are often blamed for whatever goes wrong in the school setting at the neglect of other likely factors. This view is skeptical in the sense that it is not backed by research findings or investigations. Moreover, instead of the government through various education boards to monitor the effective carrying out of the assignment programme, they heap the blame of poor student's performance on teachers.

Like the government, parents are not also up to their responsibility. They are of the opinion that, the teaching of the child is the responsibility of the teacher alone. They do not know that teaching consists of a number of inter-related activities, none of which in itself constitutes teaching. Obanya (1980) opines that the teaching process is a cyclic chain of activities and the teacher's confrontation with the pupils in the classroom is only a point in the cycle.

Therefore, the objectives of this study are, first, to identify the relevance of class assignment in senior secondary school curriculum, particularly in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State; second, to identify the contribution of class assignment to the overall academic performance of the senior secondary school students, and finally, to identify the factors that could be accountable for the performance of students in class assignment.

Research Questions

The study focused on the following questions:

1. Who are those usually involved in assignment?
2. Does evaluation of class assignment motivate students to have more interest in their academic pursuits?
3. Does class assignment have effect on students' level of performance?
4. What implication does class assignment have on the teachers and schools?

Method

The population of this study was designed to cover the senior secondary section often (10) selected secondary schools, li on ever, as at the time of this research, SS III students were no longer in school because they had finished their final SSCF. examination. The average population of SSI and SS II in each school amounted to 105 students. The selected secondary schools include six (6) public and four (4) private secondary schools. Out of the 10 secondary schools only one is a girls' school, the other 9 are mixed (coeducational) schools, as shown in Table 1.

The sample covered one hundred and ten (110) students and sixty (60) teachers randomly selected from 10 secondary schools in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State. Eleven (11) questionnaires were distributed to students and six (6) to teachers from each school.

Table 1: Chosen Schools and Their Locations

S/N	Name of School	Location	Type
1.	Ujoelen Grammar School, Ekpoma	Ujoelen	Mixed
2.	Ujemen Secondary School, Ekpoma	Ujemen	Mixed
3.	Emaudo secondary School, Ekpoma	Emaodo	Mixed
4.	Iruekpen Girls Secondary School, Iruekpen	Iruekpen	Girls
5.	Ogwa Grammar School.	Ogwa	Mixed
6.	University Demonstration Secondary School, Ekpoma	Ihumudumu road	Mixed
7.	Zanna Royal Academy, Ekpoma.	Equare	Mixed

8.	Austin-Beth Secondary School, Ekpoma	Eguarc	Mixed
9.	Mousco International Comprehensive College	Ukpenu	Mixed
10.	Word of Faith Secondary, Ekpoma.	Ujoelen	Mixed

The instrument adopted to gather relevant information was designed and administered to the respondents. There were two different questionnaires, which were distributed to both the students and the teachers. The first section (section A) deals with the background or general information pertaining to the students and teachers while the later section (Section B) deals with such questions relating to the contribution of class assignments to students academic performance. The questions in Section B are multiple option questions.

All the schools involved were visited for the purpose of questionnaire administration; copies were distributed personally to students and teachers in the selected secondary schools after getting permission from the various principals. A brief explanation on how to tick the appropriate items was given. The purpose of the survey was also explained and the respondents were assured that their responses would be treated in strict confidence. The completed students' and teachers' copies of the questionnaire were ready for collection on the same day they were administered.

It is interesting to note that no part of the questionnaire was left uncompleted and the respondents properly answered all the questions. Thus, the information provided in the instrument could be considered to be very reliable and valuable for this study.

Results and Discussion

The study revealed that 64 out of 110 i.e. 58.2% of the total number of students interviewed are males while 46 or 41.8% of the total number of students interviewed are females. Moreover, 59 out of 110 or 53.6% of the students interviewed were found to be in SSI while 51 or 46.4% of the total students were in SSII. As noted earlier, no SS III students were used in this study because as at the time of this research, SS III students had finished their Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCB) and were already on holidays. Sixty-two (62) or 56.4% of the respondents indicated that their both parents are literate while 29 or 26.3% of the respondents indicated that they have one literate parent and 19 or 17.3% indicated that both of their parents are non-literate. These results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Parents Literacy Level

Education	Number	Percentage
Both literate parents	62	56.4
One literate parent	29	26.3
Non Literate Parent	19	17.3
Tota!	110	100.0

The implication of both parents being literate is that their children tend to perform better than children of non-literate parents. One of the respondents reported that his literate parents check his notebooks after school. So such factor motivates him to learn and do his assignments in time. However, the children of non-literate parents will not have such opportunity of their parents checking their notebooks. They therefore pay nonchalant attitude to work.

Time and Frequency of Giving Assignments

In the research carried out on the time of giving assignment, it was discovered that ten out of one hundred and ten (110) students or 9.10% of the students reported that their teachers give them assignments at the beginning of the lesson, 91 out of 110 or 82.7% reported that they are given assignments at the end of the lesson. While 9 out of 110 or 8.2% of the students reported that their teachers do not give them assignments at all, as shown in Table 3.

The implication of not giving assignment to students at all is that it will make the students lazy and not to be consistent with their studies. Such students are likely to read their books only when their examinations are at hand.

Table 3: Time of Giving Assignment

Time	No.	Percentage (%)
At the beginning of the lesson	10	9.1
At the end of the lesson	91	82.7
No assignment is given to us at all	9	8.2
Total	no	100.0

In the research work done on the frequency of giving assignments, it was observed that 53 (or 48.2 %) out of 110 students reported that their teachers give them assignments on regular basis, while 57 out of 110 or 51.8% reported that their teachers do not give assignments on regular basis. This is revealed in Table 4.

From the questionnaire distributed, 93.6% of the total number of students reported that their teachers give them feedback after marking the assignments while 6.4% reported that their teachers do not give them assignments on regular basis, while 57 out of 110 or 51.8% reported that their teachers do not give assignments on regular basis. This is revealed in Table 4.

From the questionnaire distributed, 93.6% of the total number of students reported that their teachers give them feedback after marking the assignments while 6.4% reported that their teachers do not give them feedback after the assignment. It was also discovered that feedback from assignments motivates the students to learn more. On the other hand, if students are not given feedback, they will not know how they performed and how they will effect corrections and improve on their overall performance.

Table 4: The Frequency of Giving Assignments

Frequency	Students' Response		Teachers' Response	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
Regular	53	48.2	39	65
Not regular	57	51.8	21	35
Total	110	100	60	100

Table 5 revealed that 78.3% of the teachers reported that students' assignment scores are reflected in their overall performance, while 10.0% reported that their assignment scores are not reflected in their overall academic performance, and 11.7% reported that their assignments scores are sent to the national examination body.

The implication of reflecting the assignments scores on the total scores of the students is important because it helps those students who fall sick during examination or who are faced with one misfortune or the other during examination to meet up. When assignment scores are reflected, it helps to reduce examination malpractices. Students will not have to carry offensive equipment to examination halls since a substantial percentage of the marks or scores have already been taken care of by assignments and tests. This will help the students to be regular in schools, because refusal to come to school will automatically lead to failure. Some students form the habit of absconding from school till it is examination time.

In this regard, Ughamadu (1991) had emphasized that the implications of class assignment on teachers are that teachers should be able to combine the various scores obtained by students in the different assignment exercise. He stressed that the teachers should use the various scores to diagnose student-learning difficulties and assist them by giving appropriate redemption.

Table 5: Students Assignment Scores

Hem	No,	Percentage
They are reflected in their overall performance	47	78.3
They are not reflected in their overall performance	6	10.0
They are sent to National Examination body	7	11.7
Total	60	100.00

Most students do not submit assignment at the stipulated time. Majority of them submit at the stipulated-time while others, late on the same day of submission or after that day. Table 6 shows that 31.8% of the students do not submit assignment at the stipulated time, as a result of sickness. 24.5% also reported that their failure to submit assignment is due to absenteeism. Furthermore, 34.5% revealed that .their lateness in submitting assignment is due to serving of punishment, while 19.1% of the students reported that their failure to submit assignment at the stipulated time is as a result of restlessness.

Table 6: Factors Responsible for not Doing Assignments

Factors	Number	Percentage
Sickness	35	31.8
Absenteeism	27	24.5
Serving Punishment	38	34.5
Restlessness	26	19.1

From Table 6. it is obvious that the greatest percentage-of students do not submit assignments because of bad behaviour, which will result in serving punishments. Teachers are therefore advised to mind the type of punishments given to students. It should not entail punishment that will take them away from class for a long time.

Factors Responsible for Students Poor Performance in Assignment

It has been observed that of all the total factors responsible for students poor-performance in assignments, lack of interest carries 58.3%, which is the highest of the total factors, as indicated in Table 7. The implication of this statement is that students are no longer interested in reading. Many of them are looking forward to the time they will go and enroll themselves in so called "miracle centers", waiting for manna to fall from heaven. So many factors are responsible for the lack of interest, which include some teachers indulging in the act of taking money from students and in turn dictate the answers to them.

Other students are not interested in reading because of pleasure; they rather engage themselves in watching movies and attending parties than to read their books. Table 7 also shows that laziness is the second highest factor of 56.7%. This means that most students prefer pleasure to hard work, forgetting that no man achieves success without hard work. The next highest factor from Table 7 is lack of relevant textbooks amounting to 46.7%. This means that lack of books in the libraries has also contributed to students' poor performance.

Playfulness is the fourth highest factor responsible for students' poor performance in assignments, which carries 45.0% of the total percentage of the factors responsible for students' poor performance in assignments. Parents and teachers should therefore monitor their children's activities to minimize too much play.

Forgetfulness and too much domestic work amounted to 35% each. This means too much domestic work can affect students' performance. Parents who send their children out for hawking after school should therefore desist from such attitude.

Another factor responsible for students' poor performance in assignment is that students regard certain subjects as difficult. This factor accounted for 30% of the total responses. Some students form wrong notions in their mind concerning some subjects, therefore no matter how the teacher work hard to encourage them, they do not see the need to study such subjects. This will lead to their poor performance in the assignments given them from such subjects and consequently in their overall academic performance.

Lack of time is just 28.3% and the lowest of the total factors. The significance of this is that students should be taught to make judicious use of their time.

However, some teachers noted that other factors responsible for students' poor performance can be absenteeism, inability to buy necessary books, watching of home videos and televisions, partaking in extra lectures after school, playing games, and inadequate academic foundation.

Table 7: Factors Responsible for Students Poor

Performance

Factors	Number	Percentage
Laziness	34	56.7%
Lack of relevant books	28	46.7%
Lack of interest	35	58.3%
Forgetfulness	21	34.0%
Subject being difficult	18	30.0%
Lack of time	17	28.3%
Too much domestic work	21	35.0%
Playfulness	27	45.0%

Note:

From the data collected on the factors that motivate students to do their assignments, it was observed that the factor that assignments help the students to learn more accounts for the highest percentage of 57.3%, as shown in Table 8. This means that the assignments given to students make them more devoted to their studies.

In this respect, Ohuche (1988) stated that class assignment encourages good study habit among students. This is so because students obviously see the need to work harder on their studies. In other words, since the students are regularly assessed, it becomes incumbent upon them to always get prepared for any examination.

Table 8: Factors that Motivate Students to do Assignment

Factor	Number	Percentage
My assignments are marked often	25	22.7
The comments made by my teachers on the assignment	10	9.1
My teachers encourage me to do my assignment	22	20.0
My parents normally check my marked assignments at home	25	22.7
I have good books	6	5.5
Good books in our school library	0	0
Assignments help me to learn more	63	57.3

Note: The computation of each factor is based on the total, e.g., $(25/110) \times 100$.

22.7% of the respondents reported that the factor that motivates them to learn is the feedback they receive from their teachers after the assignments. This implies that the teachers should endeavour to mark the students assignments regularly and feedback given to them. Refusal to do so can lead to discouragement.

Table 8 also indicates that the same percentage of 22.7% reported that they are motivated to learn through their assignments because their parents normally check their notebooks at home. This means students with literate parents have this opportunity mainly, while the illiterate parents do not care about their class work. 20% of the respondents reported that their teachers encourage them to learn by working harder. 9.1% respondents reported that the factor that motivates them to learn is usually the comments made by their teachers on their assignments. This means that the comments made by the teacher on the students' assignment should always be positive, even if the performance is poor in order not to discourage the child. Negative comments discourage while positive comments encourage.

It was also discovered during the course of study that 5.5% of the respondents reported that they have the recommended textbooks. This percentage is very low compared to the total number of students interviewed. 5.5% is equivalent to 6 (six) students out of the 110 students. This shows that majority of the students in our secondary schools have no textbooks and are therefore not motivated to learn.

Factors Responsible for Students Good Performance in Assignment

From the study 71.7% of the respondents reported that hard work and discipline is the major factor that can lead to students' good performance in assignment, as shown in Table 9. This indicates that students should be encouraged to work hard so that they can have very good scores in their overall performance.

Next to this factor is devotion to reading with 60% of the total factors responsible for students' good performance in assignments. Appropriation of time accounts for 43.3% of the total factors. This means that no matter how clever the student is, if he or she does not appropriate time well, the overall performance can be poor.

Table 9 also shows that 33.3% of the respondents indicated that punctuality to school is another major factor responsible for students' good performance. This is true because students who come late to school find it difficult to catch up with those who come early to school. And as such their academic performance generally tends to be poor.

High intelligence amounted to 35.0% as a factor responsible for students' good performance in assignment. This shows that students who are naturally intelligent perform better than students who are slow in learning. This fact remains established if the intelligent students work hard and utilize his or her time properly.

Table M: Factors Responsible for Students' Good Performance in Assignment

Factor	Number	Percentage
High intelligence	21	35.0
Devotion to reading	36	60.0
Appropriation of time	26	43.3
Hard work and discipline	43	71.7
Punctuality to school	20	33.3

Note: The computation of each factor is based on the total, e.g., $(21/60) \times 100$.

Results further show that 45.5% of the respondents reported that the relevance of class assignments to students' academic performance is the fact that it makes the students to be consistent in reading and studying their books. While 32.7% of the respondents are of the view that class assignment helps the students to prepare more for their final examination, 21.80% of the respondents reported that class assignment makes the students to be familiar with the type of questions the teacher will set during examination.

From the above, it is certain that class assignment is in all ways related to students' academic performance.

Conclusion

The issues that motivated this study as incorporated in the objectives have been carefully investigated. It has been noted that there are qualified teachers in the secondary schools but lack of facilities is a major problem inhibiting the effective teaching, as well as the implementation of class assignment. The government should ensure that the schools are properly equipped. It was also observed that class assignment enhances good study habit. In this regard, teachers are advised to make use of class assignment as it encourages self-learning or independent study. Finally, we believe that the findings and recommendations of this study have opened up new areas for further research, like the investigation of the contribution of home assignment to students' academic performance.

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