

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND STUDENTS' LEARNING OUTCOME IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

By

PROF. UGOCHUKWU K. AGI

*Department of Educational Management,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.*

And

JOYCE VADUKWEENEM OTEYI

*Department of Educational Management,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.*

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between continuous assessment and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 265 principals, and 530 vice principals in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State which amounted to the total of 795 participants. A sample size of 400 participants was drawn from the 265 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria using the Taro Yamane formula. A self-structured four-point scale questionnaire titled "Continuous Assessment Questionnaire (CAQ) and Students' Learning Outcome Questionnaire (SLOQ) were validated. The reliability of the instrument yielded the index of 0.84 for continuous assessment questionnaire and 0.79 for students' learning outcome questionnaire. The research questions were answered and hypotheses tested using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that there is a significant relationship between continuous assessment and students' learning outcome in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. There is a strong positive relationship between classroom activities, homework, special project and students' learning outcomes ($p < 0.005$). Findings clearly suggested the need for school administrators to be involved in monitoring continuous assessments for improved students' outcome. It was recommended among others that educational managers and administrators should always supervise and monitor teachers strictly on continuous assessment in public secondary schools.

Keywords: Continuous assessment, Classroom activities, Homework, Special projects, Learning outcome, Administrators

Introduction

The crux of every level and type of education in both developed and developing economies is to ameliorate the training of humanity. This training enhances the capability of an active and productive individual. It is incontrovertible to emphasize that the central part of the educational process is the quality of the learning gained by the learners. Learners can be extremely busy attending to classes, studying at the library, science laboratories, having team studies, and other forms of learning without profitable assimilation that will ensure that learning has actually taken place. Teachers can as well abstain from absenteeism, chronic lateness, attend seminars and workshops to acquire apposite knowledge and germane skills beneficial to students, teach with the best method and utilize the required instructional materials without ascertaining that learning has actually taken place in the education institutions especially at the secondary level of education in Nigeria. That was the reason Amadi (2013) put forward that the hallmark of the educational process is the amount of learning that takes place in the learner. It is obvious that teachers and educational administrators do not use magical powers to ascertain students' performance, but the probing question is; how can academic performance of students be ascertained? It can be ascertained through effective assessments. If their performance in both learning and behaviour are well assessed, their academic performance can be rated accordingly.

Sadly, public secondary school teachers insufficiently assess students; more energy is channeled to tests and final exams while continuous assessments like class work, homework, role play, interactive discourses amongst others are being played down. Hence, it is the primary role and duty of the principal and the vice principals to keep an eye on what transpires in class, they should by all means visit classrooms during activities for strict observances and routine checks for improved learning outcomes. The study investigated the relationship between continuous assessment and students' learning outcomes with particular interest on the views of school administrators'. The scope centered on class room activities, homework and special projects as variables for students' leaning outcomes.

Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment is an indispensable approach that enhances learning, helps the teacher in knowing the performance level of students and dispels murky attitude of some recalcitrant students. It is a regular collection that keeps the teacher, students and their parents well abreast on happenings. This implies that students' assessment is continuous not just a daily or weekly exercise. It can take different ways and forms. It also determines the seriousness and performance level of every students in a particular class as well as the school. This aforementioned dictum corroborates with the assertion of Ipaye in Okwuba (2018) that continuous assessment is a comprehensive process of determining the overall achievements of each learner in areas of knowledge, hard work, character and otherwise through certain tools and techniques like test, observation, project, assignment and other useful means within a specific period. Continuous assessment gives teachers the insight to discover the level of a child's mental development and social skills which will enable him or her to have right judgment and have quality relationship with others in the society. The total information on a learner's academic and behavioural pattern enables the teacher have a clear image about a particular learner. This will help the teacher focus on students' special need areas.

Continuous assessment also helps the students to check and rate their performance, as this could either help the learner improve or stabilize efforts.

According to Bamjor (2016), continuous assessment is a comprehensive and systematic assessment of a learned person on the learners to ascertain the specific level of their intelligence, emotions, attitude, behaviour and social skills of each learner. Ojaka (2019) further stressed that assessment of students to achieve their level of intelligence quotient is the best way to select best brains for nation building as well as students' special areas of needs. Therefore, both excellent and poorly performing students have special needs that require expertise attention. That is why a teacher must be a good observer, counselor and guidance. It is also pertinent to note that student with a special need ought to be given a scintillating and desirable counseling and instructions. But because non-teachers are now teaching, our children without expertise knowledge and with superficial instructions, students are not adequately guided and assessed.

In a nutshell, continuous assessment is an academic process and technique used by teachers to frequently check and examine students' competences and abilities which shall be recorded appropriately with scores and grades to ascertain their positions and increase learning culture. It can also

be seen as a systematic and unbiased process of using special appraisal techniques and tools to ascertain the performance level of every student in a school over a period of time in order to find out their level of intelligence and behavioural pattern which shall be used to gather academic information for effective decisions on them. It is therefore implied that continuous assessment allows for constant checking and examination of pupils' productivity or students' learning outcome.

Students' Learning Outcome

Students' learning outcome is an academic and conventional feedback expected from individual students during and after a specific level of education. Some students portray negative attitudes after lengthy academic years with a special and prodigious course of study in famous and unique educational institutions. Nahugbe (2009) sees students' learning outcome as the expected behaviour generated by a child after a thorough study in an educational institution. Continuous assessment brings about positive and adequate learning competition amongst students because every individual strives to win the race in all classroom activities; test, quiz, debate, class work, behavioural attitudes, observation, homework and special projects. These aforementioned dictums stimulate self-learning amongst students in schools. Self-learning increases students' morale and arouses their interest to study harder. Adesoji (2019) opined that self-learning strategy brings about positive and productive behavior of students to learning which results into developmental and progressive outcomes. It is expedient to explicate that educational assessment, results into self-learning which as well produces positive attitudes, progressive mindset, developmental changes, mental and psychomotor development, competitive advantage and accelerated training of humanity. He concluded that assessment such as assignment, homework, test and craft promote learning.

Classroom Activities

A classroom activity is an all-encompassing technique by the teacher to test and get feedbacks from students on a just concluded topic. It corrects and prepares the students for future school task. Classroom activities edify students for perennial learning outcome. Ajibade in Oduka (2018) stated that positive attitude promotes learning while negative attitude debases it. Olabinke (2018), opined that classroom activities provides competitive advantage, special

insights and gives students the morale to learn at their own pace to comprehend all academic exercises in the school. It is also worthy of note to mention that class work, role play, interactive discourses and demonstrations as part of classroom activities largely contributes to students' academic performance.(Olabinke, 2018).

Homework

Homework helps pupils/students to learn and study at home; assisted by parents, relatives and private tutors. Due to the familiarity and closeness at home students do not face certain fears, anxiety and tension. It is always useful in teaching and learning outcome as it helps students to discover new ideas and techniques. Homework makes parents to contribute directly to the teaching and learning of child's cognitive, affective and psychomotor development. Oduka (2018), averred that children whose parents are enlightened with caring attitudes of spending time in terms of knowing their academic performance, assisting in their homework and teaching moral attitudes to them always performs credibly well in classroom learning activities. Odema (2016) also encapsulated that homework inspires students with low academic performance to perform a difficult task to a reasonable extent. It is insidious to carry out the act of teaching without homework exercises and special projects.

Special Project

Special projects are wealthy and fascinating teaching techniques and tools that promote students' talents and skills for one's success and in solving societal problems. Wokoma (2015) averred that special project brings about an increased learning amongst students. It is a discovery tool to solving future challenges in a distressed economy. It facilitates learning and promotes the spirit of self-reliance. Patima (2016) posited that special projects enable students to discover new knowledge to solving educational and societal problems. Special project takes the form of craft/psychomotor and cognitive development. Performance of students in special project development increases skills such as writing skills, psychomotor skills, discovery skills and aesthetic skills. In this kind of learning technique, the work is thoroughly supervised, assessed and rated according to the quality of the work. At the end of the exercise, knowledge generated will be bankable to the society. Multiple reports from the findings of Adera and Joe (2017)revealed that after special projects were introduced performance heightened.

Statement of the Problem

Education is the bedrock of development in every given economy. That was why schools were established, financed and managed to obliterate the shackles of illiteracy and backwardness which are not features of development that education introduces at any given time. Schools are catalysts for human, social, political and economic development. It helps in training and nurturing students to become productive citizens to accelerate changes for better and productive economy. But it is regrettable that most students are exhibiting negative behaviour that are not bringing and sustaining national growth and development in the society. Most students are showing and portraying unproductive behaviour such as flippancy, distractedness and truancy during classroom activities.

The probing question is that students of public secondary schools are not taking their assignment, test, homework, project, examinations and other forms of academic assessments seriously. Research and observation has shown that their lackadaisical attitude has affected the teachers to the point that proper assessments cannot be given to ascertain students' readiness for academic success and other learning outcomes. It has also shown that the low spirits, negativisms and belligerence that students display is the leading cause of the tremendous failure amongst them. So many students of public secondary schools in Rivers State do not succeed in both internal and external examinations, admission into the tertiary institutions and do not possess positive attitude toward teaching and learning.

Pessimism amongst students of senior secondary schools is alarmingly on the increase as they fail to take school work seriously. To this end, erudite scholars have indisputably tried to examine and relate continuous assessment to school productivity. However, we need to know how effective the role of administrators' in monitoring continuous assessment in terms of classroom activities, homework and special projects can stimulate students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to ascertain the relationship between continuous assessment and students' learning outcome as viewed by school administrators in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Establish the extent to which classroom activities influences students' outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the extent to which homework impacts students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. Determine the extent to which special project influence students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent do classroom activities influence students' learning outcome in public senior secondary school in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does homework impact on students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. To what extent do special project influence students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between classroom activities and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between homework and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. There is no significant relationship between special project and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Methodology

This study adopted the correlational design with a population of two hundred and sixty five (265) principals and five hundred and thirty (530) vice principals which comprises both the vice admin and academic in the 265 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This gave a total of 795 principals and vice principals. Taro Yamane (1967) formula was used to draw four hundred (400) principals and vice principals as participants which were used as sample size for the study. Out of this one hundred and thirty three

(133) are principals while two hundred and sixty six (266) are vice principals; two hundred and thirty five (235) were males and one hundred and forty eight (148) were females. Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were sent out to the participants; out of these three hundred and seventy seven (377) copies were completed and retrieved for data analysis. A self-designed instrument titled Continuous Assessment Questionnaire (CAQ) and Students' Learning Outcome Questionnaire (SLOQ) were validated by three experts in the Department of Educational management (Measurement and Evaluation). The reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach Alpha Statistical method which yielded an index of 0.84 and 0.79 for CAQ and SLOQ respectively. The instruments were divided into three sections. Section A; Bio data, Section B: Information on Continuous Assessment, and Section C: Information on Students' Learning Outcome. The instruments were patterned according to modified Likert Scale of very high extent (VHE) = 4, high extent (HE) = 3, low extent (LE) = 2 and very low extent (VLE) = 1 respectively, a criterion mean of 2.5 guided the decision. Thus, the mean score greater than 2.5 was regarded as HE. While mean score less than 2.5 connotes LE. The instruments were administered by the researcher and three trained research assistants to the participants. The research questions were answered and analyzed while the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Results

Research Question 1: to what extent does classroom activities influence students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation responses of principals and vices on research question one.

S/N	ITEMS	PRINCIPAL			V. PRINCIPAL		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Classroom activities prepares students for future academic tasks	3.09	0.68	HE	3.05	0.66	HE

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2	It edifies students for perennial learning outcome	3.12	0.64	HE	3.08	0.60	HE
3	It instills greater positive attitude to students	2.74	0.87	HE	2.3	0.74	HE
4	It enables teachers to identify students special areas of needs	3.80	0.92	HE	3.70	0.88	HE
5	Teachers use it to receive feedback on the extent of educational goal attainment	3.08	0.83	HE	3.00	0.74	HE
Grand total		15.83	3.94		15.43	3.62	
Grand Mean		3.166	.788	HE	3.086	.724	HE

In the overall, table 1 indicated that all the items (1-5) had mean above the criterion mean of 2.50, in summary, with grand mean of 3.166 and 3.086 for principals and vice principals respectively and standard deviation grand scores of .788 and .724 for principals and vice principals respectively.

Research question 2: To what extent does homework impact on students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation responses of principals and vices on research question two.

S/N	ITEMS	PRINCIPAL			V. PRINCIPAL		
		Mean	SD		Mean	SD	
		Decision			Decision		
6	Homework helps students to discover new ideas	3.40	0.78	HE	3.28	0.74	HE
7	It helps students to discover new techniques	3.64	0.82	HE	3.60	0.81	HE
8	Homework helps students to learn at home	3.84	0.96	HE	3.82	0.94	HE
9	It is useful in teaching learning process	3.86	0.98	HE	3.85	0.97	HE
10	It inspire students with academic performance to perform difficult task to a reasonable extent	3.44	0.82	HE	3.42	0.81	HE

Grand Total	18.18	4.36		17.97	4.27	
Grand mean	1.67	.872	HE	3.60		.860
				HE		

In the overall, table 2 showed that all items (6-10) had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, in summary, with the grand mean of 3.67 and 36 for principals and vice principals respectively, and standard deviation grand scores of .872 and .860 for principals and vice principals respectively.

Research question 3: To what extent do special project influence students’ learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation responses of principals and vices on research question three.

S/N	ITEMS	PRINCIPAL			V. PRINCIPAL		
		Mean SD			Mean SD		
		Decision			Decision		
11	Special project is a discovery tool to solving failure challenges in a distressed economy.	2.92	0.88	HE	2.89	0.87	HE
12	It facilitates learning	3.80	0.98	HE	3.78	0.96	HE
13	It promotes the spirit of self-reliance	3.82	0.97	HE	3.76	0.94	HE
14	It increases discovery skills	3.62	0.84	HE	3.60	0.81	HE
15	It increases the level of aesthetic skills for future development	3.74	0.82	HE	3.68	0.79	HE
	Grand Total	17.90	4.49		17.71	4.37	
	Grand Mean	3.58	.898		3.542	.874	HE

In the overall, table 3 revealed that the mean score (11-15) had a mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, in summary, with the grand mean of 3.58 and 3.542 for principals and vice principals respectively, and standard deviation grand scores of .898 and .874 for principals and vice principals respectively.

Table 4: Students’ learning outcome

Mean and standard deviation responses of principals and vice principals on students' learning outcome.

S/ N	ITEMS	PRINCIPAL			VICE PRINCIPAL		
		MEAN	SD	DECISION	MEAN	SD	DECISION
16.	Healthy working relationship with others in the society	2.98	0.81	HE	2.56	0.7	HE
17.	Students having total personalities that evoke strong feelings	3.50	0.89	HE	3.62	0.82	HE
18.	Always dressing neatly and decently	2.81	0.91	HE	3.72	0.79	HE
19.	Excellence in both internal and external exams	3.60	0.82	HE	2.90	0.86	HE
20.	Demonstrate professional competence in one's area of discipline	3.72	0.80	HE	3.49	0.91	HE

21.	Demonstrate very sound knowledge in every sphere of life	2.95	0.79	HE	2.77	0.79	HE
22.	Easily characterized as a person with Godly character and knowledge	3.47	0.87	HE	3.84	0.63	HE
23.	Always leads an exemplary life in the society	3.73	0.92	HE	3.99	0.80	HE
24.	Displays eloquence, boldness and confidence amongst peers	2.90	0.73	HE	3.78	0.73	HE
Grand total		30.66	7.54		29.65	7.08	
Grand mean		3.40	0.03		3.29	0.78	

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between classroom activities and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 5: The relationship between classroom activities and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Variables	N	df	r	Level of sig	P-value	Decision
Classroom activities	377	375	0.83	0.05	0.04	H01 Rejected
Students' learning outcome						

Table 4 revealed that the correlation coefficient ($r=0.83$) between classroom activities and students' learning outcome is high and positive. The significant value of 0.04 ($p<0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between classroom activities and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between homework and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 6: The relationship between homework and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Variables	N	df	r	Level of sig	P-value	Decision
Homework	377	375	0.76	0.05	0.02	H01 Rejected
Students' learning outcome						

Table 5 revealed that the correlation coefficient ($r=0.76$) between homework and students' learning outcome is high and positive. The significant value of 0.02 ($p<0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between homework and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between special project and students’ learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 7: The relationship between special project and students’ learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Variables	N	df	r	Level of sig	P- value	Decision
Special project	377	375	0.78	0.05	0.01	H01 Rejected
Students’ learning outcome						

Table 6 revealed that the correlation coefficient ($r=0.78$) between homework and students’ learning outcome is high and positive. The significant value of 0.01 ($p<0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between special project and students’ learning outcome in public senior secondary

Discussion of Findings
Classroom Activities

The findings of this study showed that there is a significant high relationship between classroom activities in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The r-value of 0.83 showed that there is a significant high relationship between classroom activities and students’ learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. This implies that an increase in the independent variable (classroom activities) leads to a corresponding increase in the independent variable (students’ learning outcome).

This finding agreed with the assertion of Olabinke (2018), that classroom activities provides competitive advantage, special insight and gives students the morale to learn at their own pace to comprehend all academic exercises in the school.

Homework

The findings of this study showed that there is a significant high relationship between homework and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient of the relationship between homework and students' learning outcome was calculated to be 0.76. This implies that an increase in the independent variable (homework) leads to a corresponding increase in the dependent variable (students' learning outcome). This agreed with the assertion of Oduka (2018) that children whose parents are enlightened with caring attitudes of spending time in terms of knowing their academic performance, assisting in their homework and teach moral attitudes to them always performs credibly well in classroom learning activities. As well as that of Adesoji (2019) who declared that assessments such as classwork, homework test and craft promotes learning.

Special project

The findings of the study showed that there is a significant high relationship between special project and students' learning outcome in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The r-value of 0.78 showed that there is a high and positive relationship. This implies that an increase in the independent variable (special project) leads to an increase in the dependent variable (students' learning outcome). This finding is in conformity with the assertion of Wokama (2015) that special project brings about an increased learning among students. Patima (2016) also emphasized that special project enables students to discover new knowledge to solving educational and societal problems.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that continuous assessment is very important in enhancing students' knowledge. For actual learning to take place, and for knowledge to increase, continuous assessment should be taken seriously, in the areas of classroom activities, homework and special projects. More so, the visible evidences from objective one, two and three, revealed that administrators are aware of the role of monitoring continuous assessments in enhancing students learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are posed:

1. Educational managers and administrators should always supervise and monitor teachers strictly on continuous assessment in public secondary schools.
2. Teachers should always increase students' learning and knowledge through regular classroom activities, homework and special projects.
3. Students should develop and heighten the habit of doing their classroom activities, homework and special projects for increased productivity.

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