

SCHOOL TYPE AND COMPLIANCE WITH CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT MODALITIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated school type and compliance with continuous assessment modalities in secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. Five research questions and five hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was considered suitable and adopted for this study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted to select 36 schools from the six states in South-South Nigeria and the participants were randomly selected from the population of schools. A researcher-developed instrument known as “Continuous Assessment Modalities Questionnaire” with reliability index of 0.71 based on Cronbach alpha reliability method was used to elicit data from 210 teachers from the 36 schools for analysis. Descriptive statistics (mean) was used to answer the research questions while analysis of variance was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. Findings of the study showed that many federal, state and private secondary schools in South-South Nigeria complied with continuous assessment modalities while some did not. The study concluded that many federal, state and private secondary schools in South-South Nigeria complied with continuous assessment modalities and schools not complying with continuous assessment modalities should start doing so as effective assessment of students shows them their level of academic performance and pinpoints to them areas where improvement are needed. It is recommended among others, that re-orientation and workshops should be organized for teachers to create awareness on the total compliance with continuous assessment modalities for continuous improvement in education.*

KEY WORDS: school type, compliance, continuous assessment modalities

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important areas of concern in educational practices is the assessment system in schools. Examination is a form of assessment administered in every school programme to measure the level of achievement gained at the end of each term or session. The result serves as a yardstick of performance and subsequent requirement for promotion to higher level of study by students. Before 1981, the common or only form of assessment was the traditional once-and-for-all examination administration at all levels of schools. This traditional once-and-for-all end of course or terminal examination system was faulted as a result of its inadequate assessment of students on all contents taught (Asuru, 2006). In view of the inadequacy in assessment of students based on a final terminal examination, the continuous assessment as a form of evaluation of students was introduced into all school systems with the adoption of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Continuous assessment is defined by Inyang

(2012) as a system of assessment which advocates a properly monitored educational progress of a student through his/her schooling based on his/her final result on aggregate of the separate assessments in the subjects offered. Such assessment involves the use of a great variety or modes of evaluation for the purpose of guiding and improving the learning and performances of the student. In Nigeria, various school type exist which include public and private schools, Federal and State schools; these are either situated in urban or rural areas. continuous assessment was seen as a welcome relief. Unfortunately, it has remained an albatross on the neck of the education system.

Having adopted the policy on education for use, the Federal Ministry of Education in 1991 set up an implementation committee to draw up guidelines on uniform standards for transition from junior to senior secondary school using the continuous assessment. This is in compliance with the National Policy on Education requirement which states that certification of pupils from primary school to junior secondary school will be based on cumulative results / assessment of students. The junior school certificate will be based on continuous assessment and examination conducted by State and Federal examination boards and the senior school certificate will be based on continuous assessment and a national examination. By setting up the implementation committee, the Federal Government made it mandatory for all secondary schools to comply with the guidelines. Similarly, with regard to obtaining valid continuous assessment scores for incorporation in the final Junior School Certificate Examinations, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) recommended that the following aspects of school work should be used as generating continuous assessment scores from schools. These are tests, assignments (take-home), regular class work and end of term examination. The schedule of administration of the continuous assessment should be a minimum of two tests administered per subject per term; three take home assignments per term in every subject; class exercise every week of teaching in each subject to be supervised and graded by the teacher within the duration of the lesson, and a project per term per subject and quantifying /weighing of instruments (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

The school-based assessment has a major role to play in the education of the learners because they spend the best part of their lives in the school with teachers and it is through the teachers assessment that their capabilities are better understood. Assessment is relevant for maintenance of quality and for certification among other purposes. The extent of quality to which these purposes of assessment are achieved depends to a large extent the level of compliance of schools with the modalities of continuous assessment. Continuous assessment is not really a new concept in the education literature. Various countries of the world have used this system for several decades and it has worked well for them in predicting student performance and ability. Continuous assessment as an assessment carried out in an on-going process (Mwebaza, 2010), is an objective judgement considered an important part of structured assessment purposely designed and administered to enable the teacher to evaluate some aspect of a student learning at a specific time. Continuous assessment does not solely depend on formal tests, it is more than giving a test; it involves every decision made by the teacher in class to improve student's achievement (Mwebaza, 2010).

On the basis of provision of guidelines on tests, assignments and projects, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) states that the distinction that may be drawn between tests is that teachers construct tests while specialists in test construction design others. Teachers construct tests to measure the extent to which their students have mastered what they were taught. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) also states that to operate continuous assessment at the secondary school level, the composition of a committee is needed (Continuous Assessment School Committee) which should include the principal or vice-principal, the school guidance counsellor, head of science section, head of arts section, head of technical section and the examination committee of the school. If there is a member of staff who has had special training in evaluation, tests and measurement, psychology or similar fields, the person should be a member of the school committee. However, for an effective and result-oriented continuous assessment programme in a school setting, Bila (2013) maintained that there must be a standing school subcommittee for supervising continuous assessment.

Continuous assessment is comprehensive, systematic, continuous, diagnostic and integrative of teacher-directed assessment procedure. It originates from the classroom situation requiring active participation and involvement of students with emphasis on learning rather than importance of scores and grades. It is a complex process that allows the use of different modes of assessment procedures to gather and/or provide information for decision making on education-related matter. Continuous assessment allows continuous evaluation of students at intervals in the three domain of leaning such as cognitive, affective and psychomotor using different instrument such as test, assignment, observation, interview, questionnaire and project. To obtain accurate and reliable test data on a student, assessments should be spread over multiple times, allowing the student to take tests at different times throughout the year. Continuous assessment prescribes the administration of one assignment at the end of each month of the school term. Through continuous assessment, the average of the scores earned by the student will be a more accurate indicator of the student's performance in the subject. The performance of a student can be better assessed if the assessment is made on different test modes such as class tests, class exercises, home work, projects and other practical activities. Homework is important in the instructional system and teachers must therefore give homework as part of the instructional process.

A further need for implanting continuous assessment in secondary schools is that it includes tasks that require high ability thinking and performance. Such tasks require analytical thinking; the ability to generate different solutions to a problem; the ability to plan a project; and the ability to be innovative, generate new ideas and create new products. High level thinking skills generally require extended time for learning and responding. Thus, continuous assessment encourages students to form the habit of using high level thinking skills in solving problems rather than the habit of memorizing class notes which defeats the purpose of education and does not help in problem solving. Little has been done to determine schools and teachers' practices and capabilities on effective compliance with continuous assessment modalities. It is in the light of this background that this study examined school type (federal, state and private secondary schools) and compliance with continuous assessment modalities in South-South Nigeria so as to

ascertain whether the administration of continuous assessment in secondary schools have satisfied all respects of the guidelines postulated by the National Policy on Education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which school type comply with continuous assessment modalities in secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To assess the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools adhere to the minimum of four assessments per term.
2. To ascertain the level of compliance of federal, state and private secondary schools with having a school committee on continuous assessment.
3. To ascertain the extent to which implementation task force monitors adherence to policy guidelines in federal, state and private secondary schools.
4. To examine the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools attend item writing workshops.
5. To assess the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools assess affective and psychomotor domains of learning.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives, the following research questions were formulated in this study:

1. What is the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools adhere to the minimum of four assessments per term?
2. What is the level of compliance of federal, state and private secondary schools with having a school committee on continuous assessment?
3. What is the extent to which implementation task force monitors adherence to policy guidelines in federal, state and private secondary schools?
4. What is the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools attend item writing workshops?
5. What is the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools assess affective and psychomotor domains of learning?

Hypotheses

The under listed hypotheses were formulated to guide this study.

1. There is no significant difference in federal, state and private secondary schools adherence to the minimum of four assessments per term.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of compliance of federal, state and private secondary schools with having a school committee on continuous assessment.
3. There is no significant difference in the extent to which implementation task force monitors adherence to policy guidelines in federal, state and private secondary schools.
4. There is no significant difference in the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools attend to item writing workshops.

5. There is no significant difference in the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools assess affective and psychomotor domains of learning.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This research design was the most appropriate because the study seeks to describe the existing practice in terms of compliance with continuous assessment modalities. The study targeted secondary school teachers in South-South Nigeria. Teachers were selected because they are the ones who teach and execute the testing of students at the school level. Thirty six secondary schools were selected from the six states that make up this region using multistage proportionate sampling technique. Among these schools, fifteen were state government owned schools; fifteen were private schools and six federal government colleges. In each of the participating schools, teachers from the departments of English, Maths, Basic Science and Technology, Pre-vocational studies and Religious/National Values education for Junior Secondary section were sampled while teachers of English, Maths, Biology, Economics and Civics were sampled in the senior secondary. A total of 210 teachers who were randomly selected participated in the study.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire named ‘‘School Type and Compliance with Continuous Assessment Modalities Questionnaire’’ comprising of questions which measured each modality in which respondents were requested to indicate the extent of their compliance in appropriate column of Likert type scale numbered 1-5 (1=I Agree Very Much, 2= I Agree Pretty Much, 3= I Agree a Little, 4= I Disagree Pretty Much, 5= I Disagree Very Much). Each item was allowed for degree of agreement or disagreement. To facilitate data analysis and establishment of the validity, the questions were subjected to experts for scrutiny to make sure the instruments measures what it claims to measure. The 24 items in the instrument yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.71 which was an indication of internal consistency. The researcher employed face to face method in administering copies of the questionnaire on the respondents. The research questions were answered using mean and a value of 2.5 was used to determine schools with high compliance with the continuous assessment modalities. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools adhere to the minimum of four assessments per term? In order to answer research question 1, mean was used as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean scores of respondents on the level of adherence to the minimum of four assessments per term

S/N	Statements	Mean score		
		Federal	State	Private
1	I use scores from two tests to form a CA	1.85	2.80	2.45
2	I use scores from four assessments to form a CA	3.15	2.30	3.20
3	I use the scores from three assessments to form a CA	3.00	2.65	3.20
4	I use the score from end of term examination to form a CA	3.10	2.55	2.90
	Grand Mean	2.78	2.58	2.94

CA = continuous assessment

From Table 1, the result shows the grand mean scores for federal, state and private schools which indicates adherence to the minimum of four assessments per term on the basis of scores from two tests, scores from three assignments, the score of a class exercise every week of teaching and score for the end of term examination.

Research Question 2

What is the level of compliance of federal, state and private secondary schools with having a school committee on continuous assessment? To answer research question 2, mean was used as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean Scores of respondents on the extent to which federal, state and private schools comply with having a school committee on continuous assessment

S/N	Statements	Mean score		
		Federal	State	Private
5	There is a CA committee in my school	3.10	2.70	2.90
6	There is regular meetings of school committee on CA	3.00	2.80	3.00
7	My school has a test specialist as a CA committee member	2.90	2.90	3.00
8	My school CA committee has a plan activities on monitoring and improving assessment	2.90	2.85	3.05
	Grand Mean	2.98	2.81	2.99

CA = continuous assessment

The four questions in Table 2 were posed to confirm the extent to which school types comply with having a school committee on continuous assessment. The table shows the grand mean scores 2.98, 2.81 and 2.99 for federal, state and private schools respectively. This implies that the three school types (federal, state and private) have school committees on continuous assessment.

Research Question 3

What is the extent to which implementation task force monitors' adhere to policy guidelines in federal, state and private secondary schools? In order to answer research question 3, mean was used as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean scores of extent of implementation task force monitors' adherence to policy guidelines in federal, state and private secondary schools

S/N	Statements	Mean score		
		Federal	State	Private
9	There is an implementation task force on CA that monitors my school	3.10	2.90	3.20
10	Members of the task force monitor CA in my school regularly	2.85	2.70	3.30
11	Members of the task force use records prepared by teachers to monitor the CA procedures	2.90	2.55	3.15
	Grand Mean	2.95	2.72	3.22

CA = continuous assessment

The result in Table 3 shows the grand mean scores for all school types, federal (2.95), state (2.72) and private (3.22) are above the criterion mean of (2.5). Thus, implementation task force strictly monitor adherence to policy guidelines in federal, state and private secondary schools.

Research Question 4

What is the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools' attend item writing workshops? In order to answer research question 4, mean was used as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean scores of the extent of federal, state and private secondary schools' attendance to item writing workshop

S/N	Statements	Mean score		
		Federal	State	Private
12	I have attended an item writing workshop	3.25	3.20	3.15
13	I learn how to make use of Table of Specification in constructing items	2.95	3.00	2.90
14	I learn how to attach adequate weight to each domains during test construction	2.80	3.05	2.90
15	I learn how to construct test items so as to reflect the construct they are designed to measure.	3.00	2.80	2.55
16	I learn how to consider the appropriate objective for each domain of learning.	2.45	2.30	2.90
17	I learn how to prepare a model answer with a well made marking scheme before scoring.	2.60	2.35	2.80
	Grand Mean	2.84	2.78	2.87

The grand mean obtained from Table 4 was above the criterion mean of 2.5. This implies that the federal, state and private secondary schools attend item writing workshops. This in turn influences the kind of items teachers use in assessment of students' learning.

Research Question 5

What is the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools assess affective and psychomotor domains of learning? To answer research question 5, mean was used as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Mean scores of federal, state and private secondary schools' assessment of affective and psychomotor domains of learning

S/N	Statements	Mean score		
		Federal	State	Private
18	I assess the non-academic aspects of students	2.60	2.45	2.90
19	I assess students' regularity and punctuality to school.	2.70	2.50	2.85
20	I assess students' participation in extra-curricular activities	2.60	2.60	3.10
21	Students are assessed based on their skills.	2.65	2.60	3.10
22	Students are assessed on how they handle school items/properties	2.50	2.35	3.10
23	I assess students' conduct based on observed behaviour.	2.70	2.60	3.00
24	Students' cooperative behaviour during group work are assessed	2.45	2.45	2.90
	Grand Mean	2.60	2.51	2.55

From the Table 9, all questions posed shows the grand mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5. It simply reveals that many teachers in secondary schools make use of scores in the areas of affective and psychomotor domains as part of their continuous assessment.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools adhere to the minimum of four assessments per term. In order to test hypothesis 1, analysis of variance was used as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Analysis of variance of federal, state and private secondary schools' adherence to minimum of four assessments per term

Sources of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	21.10	2	10.55	2.25	.115
Within Groups	267.75	57	4.70		
Total	288.85	59			

In Table 7, the result of federal, state and private secondary schools' extent of compliance with the level of minimum of four assessments per term revealed an F-value of 2.25. The critical F-ratio is 3.15; therefore, hypothesis 1 is not significant. This implies that there is significant difference in the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools comply with the minimum of four assessments per term.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the level of compliance of federal, state and private secondary schools with having a school committee on continuous assessment. To test hypothesis 2, analysis of variance was used as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Analysis of variance of federal and state schools extent of compliance with having a school committee on continuous assessment

Sources of variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.100	2	3.050	.603	.551
Within Groups	288.500	57	5.061		
Total	294.600	59			

On the extent to which Federal and State schools comply with having a school committee on continuous assessment, the result of analysis of variance in Table 7 reveals an F-value of 0.603. Since the critical F-ratio is 3.15, hypothesis two is not significant. This implies that there is no significant difference in the extent to which federal and state schools comply with having a school committee on continuous assessment.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the extent to which implementation task force monitors' adhere to policy guidelines in federal, state and private secondary schools. In order to test hypothesis 3, analysis of variance was used as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Analysis of variance of implementation task force monitoring adherence to policy guidelines in federal, state and private secondary schools

Sources of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22.533	2	11.267	4.534	.015
Within Groups	141.650	57	2.485		
Total	164.183	59			

Table 8 reveals the analysis of variance of implementation task force monitoring federal, state and private secondary schools. The outcome indicates an F-value of 4.534 which is greater than the critical 3.15. This means that there is a significant difference in the level of implementation task force monitoring federal, state and private secondary schools' adherence to policy guidelines.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference in the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools' attend item writing workshops. To test hypothesis 4, analysis of variance was used as presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Analysis of variance of federal, state and private secondary schools' attendance in item writing workshops

Sources of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.633	2	1.317	.123	.885
Within Groups	610.350	57	10.708		
Total	612.983	59			

In Table 9, the result reveals an F-value of 0.123 with a critical value of 3.15. This statistically means that there is no significant difference in the mean of federal, state and private schools' attendance to item writing workshop.

Hypothesis 5

There is no significant difference in the extent to which federal, state and private secondary schools' assess affective and psychomotor domains of learning. In order to test hypothesis 5, analysis of variance was used as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Analysis of variance of federal, state and private secondary schools' assessment of affective domain of learning

Sources of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	130.300	2	65.150	3.567	.035
Within Groups	1041.100	57	18.265		
Total	1171.400	59			

The result of analysis of variance in Table 10 indicates an F-value of 3.567 which is greater than the critical value 3.15. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is significant difference in the extent of federal, state and private secondary schools' assessment of affective domain of learning.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicated that federal, state and private secondary schools in South-South Nigeria complied with continuous assessment modalities. For instance, with reference to hypothesis one, the result revealed that federal, state and private schools complied with the level of adherence with the minimum of four assessments per term that contributed to the end of term score for the subjects taught. This therefore leads to a holistic assessment of the students in order to ascertain their performance based on the various domains of learning. These finding conforms to the findings of Ezendu (2005) who reported that in Nigeria, continuous assessment was used vigorously by geography teachers. Out of the 30 geography teachers interviewed, 28% of them used oral test, 100% used written test, while 97% used assignments and 100% used the examination as their mode of assessment. Interestingly, with reference to hypothesis two, the federal, state and private secondary schools involved have a school committee on continuous assessment. When a vibrant continuous assessment committee is in place, it ensures that teachers adhere to guidelines and effectively assess the students. This conforms to findings of Bila (2013) that for an effective and result-oriented continuous assessment programme in a school setting, there must be a standing school subcommittee for supervising continuous assessment.

With regard to hypothesis three, implementation task forces adhere to policy guidelines. Thus, this implies that when the officers who should ensure the monitoring and improvement on assessment in the secondary schools carry out of their vital roles and functions effectively, continuous assessment would be appropriately practice. This finding is in line with the finding of Bila (2013) who reported in his study that among aspects of continuous assessment implementation, taskforce committee for monitoring continuous assessment programme constitute a very important aspect of continuous assessment implementation. With respect to hypothesis four, the result did not show a significant difference in attendance of item writing workshops. It therefore means that teachers in federal, state and private schools equally attended item writing workshops which lead to the quality of instruments used by the teachers in assessing their students. This finding agrees with the finding of Onuka (2006) as he reported in his study that many teachers in secondary schools have good knowledge of test development, but there is still a

need to use a variety of instruments to effectively measure students' trait so that the results can be used to assist the students to improve themselves.

Similarly, with reference to hypothesis five, the finding showed that most teachers in the three types of schools used scores in the area of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains as part of their continuous assessment. Since students are assessed in all domains of learning, the overall ability of the students is assessed. This finding is supported by the finding of Mwebaza (2010) who reported in his study that continuous assessment is also used to provide teachers with feedback about students' performance and achievements. Therefore, teachers rely on continuous assessment in order to monitor their students' academic performance and progress; assessment becomes an interaction between the teacher and the student with the teacher continually seeking to understand what a student can do, and how a student is able to do it and then using this information appropriately.

CONCLUSION

This study examined school type and compliance with continuous assessment modalities in secondary schools South-South Nigeria. From the findings of the study, it was concluded that many secondary schools complied with continuous assessment modalities while some did not. Scores from two tests, scores from three assignments and score from class exercise every week of teaching were used as end of term score for subjects. Although, some of the schools have school subcommittee on continuous assessment, the state implementation task force also made sure that policy guidelines were strictly adhered to effectively. Good test items used by teachers were ensured through attending item writing workshops. Although some teachers used scores in the area of affective and psychomotor domains as part of their continuous assessment, students were mostly assessed in cognitive domain of learning.

Recommendations

1. Seminars and workshops should be organized for teachers to create awareness on the total compliance with continuous assessment modalities by state and federal governments.
2. The leadership of schools should liaise with area and zonal inspectorates of the Ministry of Education in order to encourage teachers to attend conferences and seminars on assessment literacy.
3. Finally, guidelines on compliance with continuous assessment modalities should be made available to secondary school teachers by state and federal ministries of education.

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