

## **Continuous Assessment Practices of Secondary School Teachers in Osun State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

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The study investigated the frequency of method of administering Continuous Assessment (CA) by secondary school teachers and ascertained students' attitudinal behaviour towards continuous assessment practice in Osun State secondary schools. It also compared the methods used by both private and public secondary school teachers in conducting CA, and determined the extent to which the basic characteristics of CA are captured in teachers' assessments. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study population consisted of all students and teachers in Osun State secondary schools. A sample of 270 students and 90 teachers were selected (using volunteer sampling) from nine secondary schools (six public and three private) in Osun state. From each of the three senatorial districts in Osun state, three Local Government Area (LGA) were selected using simple random sampling. Three schools were thereafter selected purposively from each LGA; the criterion for selecting schools was that a school should have more than ten teachers. A total of 30 students and 10 teachers were selected from each of the schools using volunteer sampling technique. Data were collected using two instruments titled Continuous Assessment Practice Questionnaire (CAPQ) and Students' Attitude towards Continuous Assessment (SATCA). Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (percentages, mean, and standard deviation). The results of the analysis showed that 44.4% of the teachers who participated in the study conducted CA fortnightly. The results also revealed that 86.7% of the students had positive attitude towards CA. Findings also revealed that the CA methods used in private schools were different from that of public schools. Sixty percent (60.0%) of private school teachers employed tests while 41.7% of public secondary school teachers frequently used assignment in assessing their students. However, 57.8% of the sampled teachers indicated that characteristics of Continuous Assessment were fairly captured. Finally, a total of 77.8% secondary school teachers indicated that the failure of government to organize in-service training, seminar, and workshop on Continuous Assessment at regular interval for teachers is a major challenge to the implementation of Continuous Assessment. The study concluded that there was a gap between policy dictated and actuality of practice among secondary school teachers in Osun State.

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## Introduction

One of the most important and significant developments in Nigerian educational system of recent was the introduction of the use of Continuous Assessment (CA) in evaluation of pupils and students in at all levels of schooling. By implication, every teacher from primary to secondary level of education should understand and practice Continuous Assessment. The emphasis on continuous assessment is not limited to Nigeria alone; other African countries notably Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, and Liberia have adopted the same policy. National Policy on Education (NPE) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) observed that the existing practice (in most institutions of learning) of basing the assessment of students work on final examination and on one-short examination only is no longer tenable. The policy further points out that the first school leaving certificate examination will ultimately be abolished and primary school leaving certificate will be issued by the headmaster of individual school and will be based on continuous overall guidance-oriented assessment of students and not on the results of a single final examination. This policy got entrenched in the earlier versions of the NPE (1981, 1983, 1994, and 2004 Eds.).

The history of the introduction of CA in Nigeria's NPE dated back to the 1969 curriculum development conference in a paper presented by the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC). The NPE (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981) states that: "Ultimately, there will be no formal examination at the end of the first six years of primary education; certificate will be based on continuous assessment." At the end of first three years following primary education, the junior secondary school certificates will be based on final examination and Continuous Assessment. The certificate will be issued by the head of the institution. At the end of the secondary years course (Senior Secondary) a formal examination will be given but the performance during the three years will be weighted and taken into account for certificate purpose. The university and other institutions of higher learning will also be required to explore ways of introducing an element of continuous evaluation/assessment of their students.

The policy dictates in the NPE changed the old British system of education which was practiced in Nigerian schools to the 6-3-3-4 system, which was American in nature. The new policy which was introduced in early 1980s stood for six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary schools, three years of senior secondary schools and four years of higher education. Irrespective of level of schooling, CA was made mandatory as a key component of school assessment such that all assessments in primary education will only be by Continuous Assessment. At the junior secondary school, 70% of students' score shall be from CA while at the senior secondary schools and higher institutions, CA shall constitute 40% of the total marks obtainable (100) in every subject.

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, 2002). 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. Not only have new courses been introduced and new contents injected into existing subjects, a fundamental change in the system of assessment of students' performance has also emerged through the formalization of Continuous Assessment as a major component of evaluation process (Idowu & Esere, 2009).

Section One Paragraph 9(g) of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) stated that “educational assessment and evaluation shall be liberalized by their being based in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual”. The main system of evaluation in the past was by means of end-of-course examination; that is, one examination at the end of all teaching and learning during the year. It neglected the assessment of non-cognitive educational objectives and created a lot of social and psychological problems for the learners. The mode of evaluation also denied teachers the opportunity of participating fully in the final assessment of their students. In view of the problems associated with the above system of evaluation, the Federal Government introduced a new system of evaluation which is ‘Continuous Assessment’. The new system therefore takes care of the problem of the old system.

The major evidence weighted in support of continuous assessment in schools is that students who are assessed continuously obtain better results than those of equal ability, assessed through a single examination (Nneji, Fatade, Awofala, and Awofala, 2012 and Mwebaza, 2010). This is because continuous assessment allows for more opportunities to test a wide range of abilities over a longer period of time than through a single examination (Eimann, 2002). Thus, the basic characteristics of CA are majorly four (Ughamadu, Onwuegbu & Osunde, 1991, Yoloje, 2009) although one may identify a host of others. Thus, CA should be Systematic, Comprehensive, Cumulative and Guidance oriented.

The systematic nature of CA demands that every assessment activity that is to be conducted by every teacher in the school is clearly articulated in the school plan. The teacher is expected to have been informed by the beginning of the school term or session about the nature of assessment activities he/she is to use in the classroom. This is expected to be in tandem with the recommendations provided in the subject curriculum as published by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). In the curriculum, appropriate assessment tools/techniques that are suitable for the topic identified are made. This is aimed at assisting teachers with inadequate knowledge of assessment techniques to be able to vary the tools employed in the collection of CAS. Thus, once the CA committee does its work of adequately informing the teachers in the school what assessment activity is expected to be conducted at any identified period of the school term, the assessment activities in such a school is systematic.

The comprehensive nature of CA is in two folds; firstly, the teacher has to ensure that different assessment techniques are employed at different times in the quest for CAS. 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. For example, a student who has phobia for test could make up for his/her inadequacy in other activities like project or take-home assignment. 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 CA 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 his/her 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 and Afolabi, 2007). The affective activities that could be factored 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, comportment, effort at knowing etc. Examples of psychomotor activities include drawing, painting, running jumping, dancing, typing, titration etc.

The third of the characteristics of CA is its cumulative nature. The cumulative nature of CA necessitates that the average CAS 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 CA for any particular school term. The performance of any student could vary over time due to a number of reasons not identified here, this shortcoming could be overcome by the determination of average CAS 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). Therefore, the final CAS of any student at any level of schooling is the composite of all the CAS obtained from time to time in a particular term and this is carried forward till the end of school year as the average score that is to be sent out to either the ministry or any of the examination bodies for use as part of the final certification score for the student.

The fourth feature of CA is that which makes it 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 he/she needs to try more so as to improve his/her 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. Whenever such reports are obtained by the teacher, he/she is expected to identify areas of students' strength and areas of weaknesses. The teacher is expected to facilitate the consolidation of the areas of students' strength in learning and at the same time plan remediation for the mitigation of the areas of weaknesses. If the teacher could not help the students in their areas 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, CA is guidance oriented. Continuous assessment (CA) should be administered in a certain specified manner. This is available in the 'Handbook of Continuous Assessment' published by the Federal Government of Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, 1985). According to the policy demand, there should be a functional CA Committee in each school. The CA committee should plan the schedule of assessment activities for the school year or term. The Vice Principal (Academic) is expected to serve as the chairperson of the CA committee while the school counselor serves as the secretary and custodian of all CAS in the school (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1992). It is the responsibility of the committee to identify the assessment activities for the term and articulate them clearly for every teacher in the school, usually at the start of the term or session.

In teaching and learning, 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. There is also the likelihood of students to be complacent, thereby developing poor study habit. 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 realise that every assessment task counts, then, they will take their teacher seriously and would always want to prepare ahead for any task to be given by the teacher. Not minding the foregoing, there appears to be a deviation from the principle and practice of CA. Not only this, there also seem to be a variance between the CA policy and actuality of practice. Many teachers have a poor conception of what CA should actually be (Adewolu, 2002). They have taken CA to mean testing or better still, continuous testing. Experience as a CA monitor with Nigeria's National Examinations Council (NECO) showed that whenever it was time for the conduct of CA activities, about 89% of teachers in the secondary school administered class test only on their student without giving them any other assessment task (NECO, 2001).

Thus, CAS generated by such teachers is nothing but continuous testing scores. The scores themselves may not be regarded as continuous testing results because the tests are usually conducted twice (or at most thrice) in a given term. This type of practice, wherever it is being done, negates and also seeks to mitigate the opportunity which CA seeks to provide learners. This is the opportunity of providing alternative avenues for the expression of students' achievement in school activities.

The old style of one-short examination which gives only one chance to the candidate to demonstrate his/her skill was found to be unfair enough. A student may fall sick while writing examination, there could also be those that have phobia for test writing and all these constitute serious challenge to the expression of students' maximum ability in assessment. CA was planned to provide alternative avenues for students to express their academic achievement outside of testing situation. Another problem in the administration of CA in many secondary schools in Nigeria is the issue of the quality of items used in the classroom for tests and examinations. The quality of the items relates to validity and reliability (two important issues that are of very high importance in testing), as well as the appropriateness of the items in term of difficulty level and discrimination index. Investigations have revealed that class teachers do not care to investigate the validity and reliability of their test items. It was discovered also, that many teachers only adopted questions from the items of public examinations for use in their classrooms (Ojo, 2008). Not all these practices are good enough for the generation of items that will be valid and reliable.

There is the issue of teachers' attitude. Human attitude is a critical factor of success in every activity in life. If a person develops positive attitude to his/her job, it will have a corresponding positive effect on his/her likelihood of attaining success on the job. The positive attitude will serve as a 'push factor' for an individual to struggle to attain excellence in whatever activity the person is involved in. The opposite is the case for whoever develops a negative attitude to his/her job. Many teachers have negative attitude to marking and this has been affecting the way they conduct their assessment activities in the class. It is expected that the teachers employs varying techniques at different occasions to obtain students' CAS. This many fail to do, and they restrict themselves to one or two assessment activities in a term simply because of their lack of interest in marking and reporting of students' performance.

One critical cause of the teachers' negative attitude to assessment activities is the negative attitude of student-teachers to assessment-related courses while in the training college or university. Experience has shown that many education students in the higher institutions (i.e. teachers in training) do not hide their dislike for Tests and Measurement courses, probably because of their quantitative nature. Thus, many deliberately absent themselves from classes and even when they attend, they hardly pay attention in such class, and where this is even not the case, they give little attention to the course(s) immediately after the semester examination, thereby throwing away their lecture notes on the grounds that the course has been completed and they should have nothing to do with its note again. This results in their forgetting all assessment-related principles quickly, even before they get employed to the teaching service. When this happens, the teacher will have very little expertise to conduct his/her assessment activities properly.

Records are poorly kept in many schools. This then makes it difficult to transfer the scores of students from term to term and from session to session as required by the 'cumulative nature' of CA, as well as the policy of government. The problem of record keeping may be attributed to the poor state of either the development or maintenance of physical structures in the school, (whereby there are no lockable doors and windows) which makes it difficult to find a secure place where students' assessment records could be kept. In some other instances, unexpected accidents like tornado or strong storm have blown off school roofs thereby damaging the records kept in the schools affected. There are some other situations whereby the teachers have just flagrantly failed to keep CA records. In such schools, CAS submitted is not likely to be valid records of the students' achievement in their class works.

It is also a matter of common knowledge that many school administrators are not sincere in their supervision of assessment activities in their schools. Some Vice Principals or even principals have on a number of times (according to verbal reports of localised practice in some schools reported during capacity building workshops) rejected true CAS submitted by subjected teachers on the grounds that students' scores were too low and that it will not project the school well if the CAS is to be submitted to the ministry or examination bodies. Not only this, it is also a generally held view that any poor (though true and valid) CAS so submitted will negatively affected their students' performance in public examinations, since such scores are to form a part of their overall assessment scores. This practice was confirmed by Faleye (2005) while investigating the practice of CA in Nigerian secondary schools. It was discovered that many school heads took the submission of high scores very seriously and they have on a number of occasions rejected poor CAS submitted by in the school and also see the teacher involved as one of those seeking the failure of the Principal of the school.

In Nigeria, the private secondary schools can be described as a type of school established, owned and managed by private proprietors, missionary bodies, communities or a group of individuals. They offer courses leading to the Senior School Certificate (SSC) that is awarded by both the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO). The Nigerian National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) recognizes the participation of private organizations in the educational system. The policy seeks the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity, the inculcation of right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, the training of the mind in understanding of the world around; and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, and competence. While Public school is maintained at public expense for, the education of the children of a community or district and that constitutes a part of a system of free public education commonly including primary and secondary schools.

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the Continuous Assessment Practices of Secondary School Teachers in Osun State. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- a. investigate the frequency use of method of administering CA by secondary school teachers in Osun State;
- b. ascertain students' attitudinal behaviour towards CA practice in Osun State secondary schools;
- c. compare the methods used by both private and public school teachers in the conduct of CA;
- d. determine the extent to which each of the four characteristics of CA (i.e. Systematic, Comprehensive, Cumulative and Guidance-oriented) are captured in Osun State; and
- e. Identify the challenges facing teachers in the implementation of CA in Osun State secondary schools.

These research questions were raised to achieve the objectives of the study:

1. How often do teachers use the various methods of Continuous Assessment in assessing the students?
2. What are the attitudes of students towards Continuous Assessment?
3. What are the methods used by private and public school teachers in Continuous Assessment practice?
4. To what extent is each of the basic characteristics of CA captured in teacher's assessment activities?

The study was limited to Osun State secondary schools students and teachers. The study covered Tests, Assignment, Students' note, and Quiz as components of CA. The concern of this study was to evaluate continuous assessment practice of Osun State (Nigeria) secondary school teachers.

## Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design. Information was obtained directly from the respondents (students and teachers) concerning the continuous assessment. The study is in line with formative evaluation, this is because the study involved analyzing the Opinion of the Teachers and Students based on their CA Practices and attitude. The dependent variables of the study were continuous assessment practices. The independent variable was social-demographic variables (age, sex, school type, teaching experience, and school type).

The study population comprised all students and teachers of private and public secondary schools in Osun State. A total 270 students and 90 teachers were used as the study samples. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used in sample selection. Three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected randomly from each of the three senatorial districts of Osun State. Thus a total of nine LGAs were randomly selected from the three senatorial districts of the state. From each of the nine LGAs, three secondary schools were selected purposively. The criterion for selection was that a school had more than 10 teachers and 30 students. A total of 10 teachers and 30 students were selected in each school using volunteer sampling. Thus, a total of 360 participants (90 teachers and 270 students) were selected across the state as the study sample.

Two instruments were used in the collection of data for the study. The first instrument is a questionnaire titled "Continuous Assessment Practice Questionnaire" (CAPQ), adopted from (Adebowale & Alao, 2008) which were used to provide information on continuous assessment practice from the secondary school teachers in Osun State. This questionnaire is divided into two sections (section A and B). Section A requested for personal information of the respondent e.g. teaching experience, educational qualification, sex, school types. Section B contains four statements on respondents' opinion on their involvement in CA. The minimum and maximum scores in this section are 4.0 and 10.0 (with a scale mean value of 6.33 and standard deviation of 1.41). A score that is less than four indicated that the basic characteristics of CA characteristics were "poorly captured" in the teacher's assessments while a score that ranged between six and seven was regarded one meaning that the characteristics of CA were moderately captured and the obtained score that ranged between eight and ten indicated that CA characteristics were highly captured in the teachers assessments.

The second instrument used was a questionnaire titled "Students Attitude towards Continuous Assessment" (SATCA) (Okpala and Onocha, 1985 and modified by Nneji *et.al.*, 2012). The questionnaire composed of two sections: (a) demographic variables: age, sex, school type, and religion and (b) consist of 23 statements made in various assessment practices and attitude to CA (with eight new statements added to the original 15 statements used by Nneji, Fatade Awofala & Awofala (2012).

Each statement is on a modified four point Likert scale (anchored by 1: *strongly disagree*, 2: *disagree*, 3: *agree* and 4: *strongly agree*) for positive statements while the reverse is the case for negative statements. In an attempt to ensure the construct validity of the instrument, the draft of the CAPQ was given to a specialist (with a PhD) in Tests and Measurement. Ambiguous items were pointed out, some items were restructured, and irrelevant ones were completely deleted.

The researcher administered the instruments for the study on both students and teachers of Osun State secondary schools with help of vice principal of each school who assisted in getting the required permission to do so. The respondents were briefed and persuaded about the essence of the study and equally informed of the confidentiality of the information that would be provided. A total of 270 students and 90 teachers' questionnaire were originally designed for the administration and all were retrieved. The collection of data took 5 weeks to complete.

The completed questionnaire was scored and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation) to answer the research questions. The research questions one, three four and five were analyzed using frequency count and percentage while research question two was analyzed using frequency count, percentage mean and standard deviation.

## Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the frequency of method of administering CA by secondary school teachers?

To answer this question, teachers' responses to items 1 to 4 of the Continuous Assessment Practice Questionnaire (CAPO) were collated and using frequency count and percentage, the frequency of teacher's use of method of administering CA in the secondary schools was determined. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Frequency of Secondary School Teachers' use of Method of Administering Continuous Assessment**

Frequency of Method of Administering CA by Secondary School Teachers	Daily	Fortnightly	Termly	Weekly	Not at all
How often do you conduct class test for your students?	4(4.4%)	40(44.4%)	23(25.6%)	22(24.4%)	1(1.1%)
How regularly do you give your students "assignment"	22(24.4%)	25(27.8%)	17(18.9%)	25(27.8%)	1(1.1%)
How often do you invite parents concerning the performance of their children	3(3.3%)	26(28.9%)	41(45.6%)	6(6.7%)	14(15.6%)
How often do you draw attention of the students to their performance in CA?	7(7.8%)	30(33.3%)	28(31.1%)	23(25.6%)	2(2.2%)

The results presented in Table 1 showed that most teachers (44.4%) of the sampled conducted class test fortnightly while 25.6% and 24.4% conduct class test termly and weekly respectively. Table 1 also showed that 27.8% of the teachers give their students assignment fortnightly and weekly while 24.4% and 18.9% give assignment to students daily and termly respectively. Furthermore, while 45.6% of the teachers invite parents for briefing on their wards' performance termly 28.9% invites the parents fortnightly. Finally, Table 1 showed that 33.3% and 31.1% of the teachers draw attention of the students to their performance in CA fortnightly and termly respectively.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of students towards CA practice in Osun State?

To answer this question, students response to 23 items of SATCA were scored and the scores obtained were used in determining the attitude of each student towards the use of CA. On the scale, the minimum and maximum scores obtainable were 23 and 92 respectively (with a mean and standard deviation values of  $\bar{X}$  = 65.77 and SD = 4.96). A score that is less than the scale mean i.e. 23-64 indicated negative attitudes while a score of 65 to 92 indicate positive attitude. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Students' Attitude towards Continuous Assessment**

Students' Attitudinal Behaviour to CA	Frequency	Percent
Positive	234	86.7
Negative	36	13.3
Total	270	100.0

Table 2 showed that the students of secondary schools in Osun State have positive attitude towards continuous assessment with a total of 234 (86.7%) of the students sample. Research Question 3: To what extent are the four characteristics of CA captured in Osun State Secondary schools?

To answer this question, teachers' responses to the Continuous Assessment Practice Questionnaire (CAPQ) were used in determining the extent to which the four basic characteristics of CA were captured in the administration and practice of CA in the secondary schools. On the scale the minimum and maximum scores obtained were 4.0 and 10.0 respectively with a mean and standard deviation values of  $\bar{X}$  = 6.33 and SD = 1.41. On this scale, a score that ranged between the minimum obtained score and a score that is less than mean (i.e. less than 6) indicated that the characteristics were "poorly captured", a score that ranged between 6 and 7 indicated that the characteristics were moderately captured while a score that ranged between 8 and 10 indicated that the characteristics were highly captured. Using frequency count and percentage, Table 3 presents the extent to which the characteristics were captured.

**Table 3: Teachers' Opinion on the Extent to which CA Characteristics were captured**

Extent	Frequency	Percent
Poorly Captured	21	23.3
Fairly Captured	52	57.8
Adequately Captured	17	18.9
Total	90	100.0

Table 3: showed that 23.3% of the sampled teachers were of the opinion that the four characteristics of CA were poorly captured, while 57.8% percent were of the opinion that the characteristics were fairly captured and 18.9% indicated that the four characteristics of CA were adequately captured in their schools. Research Question 4: What are the methods employed by public and private secondary school teachers? To answer this question, teachers' response to item 5 of CAPQ was collated and the data obtained were analyzed using frequency count and percentage. The result is as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Public and Private Secondary School Teachers CA Methods**

School Type	Secondary School Teachers CA Methods				Total
	Test	Assignments	Students' Note	Quiz	
Public	10(16.7%)	25(41.7%)	20(33.3%)	5(8.3%)	60
Private	18(60.0%)	5(16.7%)	7(23.3%)	0	30

Table 4 showed that while 16.7% of public secondary school teachers indicated that they use test, 60% of private secondary school teachers indicated that test is often used in assessing their students. This thus implies that the percentage of private secondary school teachers who employ test as means of assessing students is higher than that of the public school teachers. However, the percentage (41.7%) of public secondary school teachers who employ giving assignment to students as a means of assessing students is more than the percentage (16.7%) of teachers who used assignment in the private schools. In addition, more of the public secondary school teachers and the private school teachers make use of students' note as a method of assessing students.

## Discussion

Result emanating from the current study revealed that the frequency of method of administered CA by secondary school teachers showed that most teachers sampled conducted assessment fortnightly. Afolabi (1999) suggested that the number of times CA is conducted depends on the parameters to be used. Thus the frequency of collection of evidence of student learning (such as test, assignment or observation) is an important component of continuous assessment (Adebowale and Alao, 2008). The study also shows that the student's attitude towards continuous assessment was positive. This result is in line with the view of Ipaye (1985) who stated that the success and quality of continuous assessment depends to a large extent on the capabilities of the teacher, the support from the school system and the cooperation from the students. When teachers possess the skills to conduct continuous assessment and have full support from the school system with the students giving him maximum cooperation in terms of participation and the desire to carry out the required activities, the student will develop a positive attitude towards CA.

In determining the extent to which the four characteristics of CA were captured, the teachers were of the results emanating from the current study suggested that the frequency of continuous assessment practices of most of the teachers were systematic in nature in the sense that the students are tested at the pre-determined intervals within a given school year. This is in line with the position of Denga (1986) that students' assessment should be carried out in such a way that the students are not overstretched in the name of assessment. It also shows that the frequency of assessment practices of most teachers are fairly okay as far as cumulative nature is concerned. This is commendable and lends credence to the submission of Ipaye (1985) that the major advantage of continuous assessment is the cumulative evidence it provides the learner regarding the direction of his/her achievement in the academic area.

However, the results emanating from the present study show that the frequency of continuous assessment practices of most of the teachers were short of being comprehensive and guidance-oriented in nature. The findings contradict the work of Olomolaiye (1992) who emphasized that evaluation should not base only on cognitive but also the affective and psychomotor development. It is when a child has been exposed to a variety of learning tasks as well as conglomerate of assessment devices that valid information could be obtained about the child's overall performance.

Table 4 gives judgment to the dichotomy between public and private secondary school teachers about the method use in assessing the student in which Test, Assignment, Students' note and Quiz were sampled as methods used by teacher of secondary schools with the large percentage 60.0% of private school teachers who employed Test as a method used in assessing their students while 16.0% of the public school teachers employed Test also. Olomolaiye explained that in order to assess each learner adequately, and to discover his/her latent skills, knowledge and abilities, teachers should resort to the use of tests with the aim of collecting information with respect to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. But in public schools, teachers prefer using Assignment as a way of assessing their students.

The findings of this agrees with the view of Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2004) directed that teachers should use different types of continuous assessment in the grading and final judgment of the students. It is evident that no single teacher can use all the techniques of continuous assessment at a time. The type of assessment method used depends on the level of education and the type of information the teacher is looking for.

## Conclusion

This study has shown that the characteristics of continuous assessment were fairly captured by secondary school teachers in Osun State and that the phenomenon has negative consequences on students' academic performance. Undoubtedly, it is necessary to modify educational or assessment activities to improve the understanding of CA. Concerted efforts are required to address this so as to boost the standard of Nigerian Education.

## Recommendations

From the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made: it is recommended that Government in Nigeria should

- Mandate teachers to go for in-service training and short courses to update their knowledge and skills of continuous assessment.
- Train and post more guidance counselors into the secondary schools to help in ensuring that continuous assessment practices of the teachers are properly monitored.
- Pay particular attention to the proper practice of continuous assessment based on the principles and concept of the policy to reduce the problems of comparability of standards, records and record keeping bedeviling the National Policy on Education.
- Measurement experts should be encouraged to train teachers in the area of development of assessment.
- If teachers are well equipped and are promptly and adequately reinforced as executors of educational programs, they will serve as a great vehicle for the practices of CA in secondary schools.
- Teachers should use varieties of assessment practices in order to elicit information on the various attributes possessed by an individual
- Teacher should be committed to the use of continuous assessment on a regular basis. As the name suggests, the assessment should be done frequently.

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