

**STANDARDIZING CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT  
THROUGH TEACHER COLLABORATION**

BY

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## **ABSTRACT.**

In Kaduna Polytechnic as indeed in all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria assessment is school based . Semester scores are earned from continuous assessment (CA) and examination. While particular attention is paid to the conduct of examination by way of involving external moderation in order to ensure the standard of its questions and marking, in the case of CA, individual lecturers are left to conduct it by themselves; they set the questions and mark the scripts single handedly whereas CA scores for each semester is forty marks which we consider significant because the basic pass marks in all courses is equally forty marks. This paper addresses the idea of also standardizing the CA component of school based examination through teacher collaboration. To do this, a sample was randomly obtained and an essay test was administered. The scripts were reproduced and first marked individually by these researchers each using a self drawn marking guide and then a third marker was obtained to mark the scripts with a marking guide drawn up by both researchers. The scores of the scripts were analyzed using their mean score. Findings show that if lecturers collaborate to mark students CA scripts, students would be assessed more fairly in C A and a standard could be maintained. It is recommended that lecturers collaborate by working in teams of three to four to set CA questions and marking guide. Such questions should cover all the units in the syllabus. Chief and Principal Lecturers could internally moderate all CA scores to ensure that a standard is maintained.

## **Introduction**

Assessment of students' progress is an essential aspect of teaching and good teaching cannot exist without good student assessment (Badmus, 2005). Assessment is generally used to determine how well an educational process has addressed its set objectives (Anikweze, 2005). Ideally, according to Hayward (2007, p.258) "assessment should be integral to learning and teaching and be concerned to improve learning and achievements... Teachers' informed judgement should be at heart of the system and information for monitoring purposes should be streamlined into a single integrated system."

Assessment seen from a further dimension is according to Ali (2005) a system of a combination of a comprehensive reporting format that produces comprehensive, credible, dependable information about students. Unfortunately however, most teacher education programmes in Nigeria do not provide adequate training for prospective teachers on a wide range of strategies available for use in appropriate school based assessment (SBA) management of which continuous assessment (CA) is a part. An effective CA is the final grading of learners after systematically taking into account all their performances in the cognitive , affective and psychomotor domains over a given period of time (Alusa, 2004). CA administration then entails much more than final grading and should fully indicate the range of sources and methods that teachers have used to gather, interpret, and synthesize information about learners.

Meanwhile, evidence abound that an average teacher in a public institution in Nigeria has many responsibilities, including having large classes resulting to also having many scripts to mark, being surrogate parents at times and at other times counselors and most likely lacks the knowledge of engaging well in assessment practices (Faleye, Olutoyin and Ojerinde, 2005). Precisely, according to Ezeudu (2005, p.5) teachers lack the "confidence in developing and using reliable and valid instruments to measure the three domains of human behaviour." Resulting to the situation in which CA is not being adequately implemented in subject areas and a situation which makes "the implementation of CA a caricature" (Afemikhe, Awala and Okonmah, 2005, p.5) and teachers should not remain indifferent to the future of their students whom they teach through the decisions they make relating to their assessment (Uwakwe, 2005).

Such a situation is worrisome because CA, being an integral aspect will in the foreseeable future continue to have a place in many examination systems in our schools so that there is certainly then the need for the concern of teachers and at the heart of this concern is the need for assurance

that teacher involvement is fair (Griffith, 2005). The aspect of fairness which is the concern of this research is across the board because for quite a while now, the implementation of CA in our schools allows room for students to be at the mercy of teachers to a large extent when viewed from the manner and context of its administration on the one hand and also on the basis of the fact that students of the same level and course do not have the privilege of the same CA experience. The pertinent issue here is that CA is not accorded the same attention as examination although in some tertiary institutions, CA marks per subject/course is as much as forty (40) which is accepted as pass mark for end of semester score.

To derive the end of semester score in Kaduna Polytechnic, and similar tertiary institutions in Nigeria for instance, examination questions are set by teachers and handed over to their departments which send them to experts in sister institutions for moderation, then they are brought back and administered on students of the same class and level. Thereafter, the examination scripts are marked by the lecturers and the experts who moderated the questions come over to vet the marked scripts in order to ensure that the standard expected is maintained.

However, such a practice is not extended to CA in the case of which individual lecturers, therefore, simply set CA questions, administer and mark independently to obtain the scores that are added to the examination score of students and handed over to the department as the total score of students per course, per semester. The result of this practice according to Onjewu (2007) is the disparity in the way students of the same level are taught and assessed in the same course. The lack of the institution and ensuring of a standard in the administration of CA is the major concern of this paper.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibility of instituting some checks and balances in the administration of CA through a healthy exchange of useful insights and ideas gained from training workshops and educational conferences relating to the construction and administration of CA instruments, scoring them and interpreting them as well as communicating the scores to the parties involved including the students. This effort is viewed by these researchers as a modest intervention that could improve the present situation of CA administration pending the institution of an institutional mechanism. Also, this paper has the purpose to propose a strategy for teachers to be fairer in the administration of CA through teacher collaboration in a way that the teachers themselves would enjoy and which at the same time is cost effective both to them and the institution. This research could achieve far reaching results of putting teachers through on how to

maintain a uniform assessment procedure in CA administration in order to maintain a standard and subsequently develop professionally through cooperation with one another.

### **Research Questions**

This study sought answers to the following questions:

- ❖ Are students treated fairly in the current system of CA administration by teachers?
- ❖ Can a standard be introduced to CA administration through teacher collaboration?

### **Population And Sample**

A sample of twenty seven (27) students was randomly selected from a class of fifty four (54) students of National Diploma I (NDI) in the Department of Architecture, College of Environmental Studies, Kaduna Polytechnic. The class being one of those taught the “Use of English II’ by one of the researchers made the administration of the research instrument easy and convenient. The aim was to have a sample of manageable size in order to check the influence of the factors that relate to the administration of CA to large classes. In any case, we ensured that our sample was fifty percent of a class in which every member was given an equal chance to be included in the sample.

### **Instrumentation**

The research instrument was an essay question titled. “The significance of English Language in Nigeria”, given as assignment to the subjects with instructions as to how to write the essay and submit. Eventually, the scripts were turned in after one week. They were photocopied in order to have three copies of each and were numbered one to twenty seven (1-27). Thereafter, each of the two researchers of this paper being teachers of different arms of the same class of students took away a copy of each script; that is, twenty seven scripts. The researchers are herein referred to as lecturer A and B. Lecturer A and B then agreed to individually mark the scripts independently, deciding how the marks were allocated on their own as is the current practice of CA administration. The only agreement reached at that stage was to mark each script over fifteen marks on four aspects namely: Content, Organisation, Expression, and Mechanical accuracy, because the question was an essay and that is how it should be marked under English Language Studies. After lecturer A and B had marked , they turned in their marked scripts along with their scores and together they drew up a marking guide which was used to mark the remaining one set of scripts by another lecturer who also teaches another arm of the same class herein referred to as C. The scripts of Lecturer C, after they were marked, were given to yet another colleague in

the department for moderation, that is, to vet the correspondence and compliance of Lecturer C to the marking guide. The scores from the scripts obtained from all four lecturers made up our data for this research.

### Data Analysis Technique

Only the mean score was used in the analysis of the scores of the scripts obtained from lecturers A B C and the moderator in presentation of data:

**Table 1: Raw and mean scores of marked scripts:**

Script No	Lecturer A	Lecturer B	Lecturer C	Moderator
1	6	6	8	7
2	8	8	10	9
3	7	8	9	9
4	9	13	11	11
5	6	7	4	6
6	3	6	6	5
7	5	5	5	5
8	5	6	6	6
9	3	4	2	2
10	7	7	7	7
12	4	5	4	4
13	4	5	4	4
14	5	6	6	6
15	5	6	6	6
16	4	5	3	3
17	5	6	8	7
18	9	14	12	12
19	4	4	4	4
20	6	7	8	7
21	5	6	6	6
22	7	8	9	8
23	4	7	5	5
24	5	6	6	6
25	4	5	4	4
26	5	5	6	4
27	4	4	4	4
Total	144	174	168	164
<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>5.133</b>	<b>6.44</b>	<b>6.22</b>	<b>6.07</b>

In the table above, each of the subjects in the sample is represented by the serial numbers 1-27 in the first column. The other columns show the scores of the subjects by lecturers A, B and C as well as the moderator.

## **Discussion of the Results**

From the content of table 1 above, there is very clear evidence that different teachers do not always award the same score to the same script particularly when they are not guided by the same marking guide. This claim is clearly evident in the difference in scores given to the scripts by lecturers A and B. In the case of lecturer C and the moderator who used the same marking guide, although there are differences in the scores given, they are minimal and not consistent and therefore could be negligible. This claim is buttressed in the difference in the mean score between Lecturers A and B and Lecturer C and the Moderator. In the case of the earlier, the difference is 1.11 which is significant while in the case of the latter, the difference is only 0.15 which is negligible, by and large. Also comparing the incidents of the award of the same marks to the same scripts, between lecturers A and B there are only six (6) while between lecturer C and the Moderator, there are sixteen (16). Hence, the difference is significant.

## **Findings**

The preceding discussion lends a loud voice to the following findings:

- ❖ As far as the current administration of CA is concerned, students do not stand the chance of a fair assessment always when teachers act independently.
- ❖ Students stand a better chance to be more fairly treated in CA when teachers collaborate.
- ❖ Teacher collaboration in the administration of CA is possible and could be useful in both the institution and maintenance of a standard.
- ❖ These findings provide the answers to the research questions and are therefore relevant to this research.

## **Conclusion**

The study makes it clear through the data presented that there could be significant disparities in the scores individual teachers award to their students' scripts when they are not guided to some extent, thereby, resulting to students being treated unfairly and proves that it is however possible for teachers to be fairer to students while assessing them through collaboration with one another. This collaboration is essential for making the administration of CA a more standard practice than what it is now and also providing the avenue for teacher development.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proffered:

- ❖ Lecturers who teach the same syllabus to the same level of students should work together in teams of three or four members as is convenient for them, to determine all aspects of the administration of CA to their students.
- ❖ To ensure uniformity and minimize malpractice, such teachers could decide to administer the CA at the same time in accordance with the school calendar when the same question is administered but they could also decide to administer different questions that were set together in a team along with their marking guides.
- ❖ A committee made up of long serving and experienced teachers should be formed in the departments to internally moderate all CA scores.
- ❖ The results of this committee should form the subject of discussion in departmental workshops in order to sell the idea of teacher collaboration in the administration of CA to colleagues for a start.



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