

# Implication of Continuous Assessment on Pupils' Academic Performance in Primary Schools in Municipal Councils of Uganda: Empirical studies from Kabale Municipality

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**Abstract:** The study was to establish the impact of continuous assessment of pupils on academic performance in primary schools in Kabale Municipality. The objectives of the study were: to find out the continuous assessment strategies used by teachers in primary schools in Kabale Municipality; to find out the teachers' perception of whether pupils exposed to various continuous assessment strategies perform better in the final examination than their counterparts; and, to find out the impact of continuous assessment strategies used by teachers on pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Kabale Municipality. The study used cross-sectional research design. A sample size of two hundred respondents was used and respondents were selected using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Questionnaires, interviews and documentary review were used in data collection. Data was presented using frequency tables, graphs and pie charts. The study revealed that a variety of continuous assessment strategies were being used in primary schools. Written tests, take-home assignment, were the most, examinations and take-home commonly used. Findings indicated that in the selected primary schools in Kabale Municipality, written tests were done on weekly basis and half-term. Take-home assignments were done on daily and weekly basis and examination were done termly. It was noted that assignments and exercises have a positive relationship with pupils' academic performance. Furthermore, the study showed that increase in the use of continuous assessment such as assignment and exercises lead to an improvement in pupils' academic performance. The study showed that continuous assessment strategies were found to have a positive relationship to pupils' performance in the final examinations. The study recommended that good application of continuous assessment using different strategies would help in moving towards accomplishing learning objectives and restoring greater confidence in the class and school systems.

**Keywords:** Continuous Assessment ; Pupils' Academic Performance ; Primary Schools ;Municipal Councils ; Uganda ; Kabale Municipality

## 1.1 Introduction

Globally, developed countries such as UK and the USA have shifted towards centrally prescribed curricula which provide for inclusion of pupils with difficulties or disabilities. In terms of teacher assessment, for example, in England, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2006) directs teachers to use appropriate assessment approaches. These allow for different learning styles and ensure that pupils are given the chance and encouragement to demonstrate their competence and attainment through appropriate means that are familiar to the pupils and for which they have been adequately prepared. The Authority has provided a framework that enables teachers to recognise attainments below Level 1 of the National Curriculum (Lewis, 2011).

In a study involving primary schools in England and France, for example, Raveaud (2004) found that in classrooms where all children did the same work, some children found themselves failing repeatedly from a very early age. In England, the researcher found that differentiation had reduced the actual occurrence of errors pupils made. Furthermore, in England, not only are teaching and learning experiences designed to take into account and be appropriate for a wide range of pupil ability, aptitude and preferred learning styles. The assessment system also provides for a range of ability, aptitude and learning styles (Lewis, 2011; Booth and Ainscow, 2012).

In Ghana, there is a centrally prescribed curriculum for basic schools (primary and junior secondary), there are no special provisions for children with special needs, particularly those who record lower attainments in classrooms. In terms of assessment,

the continuous assessment programme does not make any provision for assessing and recording the progress of pupils who do not perform very well (Avoke, 2015). Teachers use the same approach for assessing all pupils to assess lower attainers' progress in learning. The use of the same approach to assess all pupils causes those who record lower attainments to continually perform poorly at school.

In Nigeria, the new National Policy on Education in Nigeria has directed that continuous assessment should be used at all educational levels for the evaluation of student achievement/performance. This means that every teacher from primary school to university should understand and practice it. Before the implementation of continuous Assessment, the summative system of assessment was used where pupils were assessed at the end of the term without including any other form of assessment, and this form of assessment was used to evaluate pupils' achievement for placement and promotions to upper class. Mock examination was conducted prior to WAEC examinations. This result was often used to determine those students that qualify to write the final examination (WAEC) and also to secure provisional admission into higher institution before the release of WAEC result (Ango, 2010). Carew (2013) stated that irrespective of how well a pupil's performance is during his/her years of schooling, if his/her performance in the summative type of examination is not good, he/she is considered incapable of advancing further in education.

In Uganda, the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC, 1989) was initiated to review the education system. The commission recommended seven years of primary education for the purpose of giving adequate time for preparation to pupils for final examinations. The same commission emphasized the importance of both continuous assessment and final examinations (EPRC 1989). The Jomtien declaration (1990) in Thailand about Education for All (EFA) required defined targets for quality improvement and it specified a need to assess pupils' achievement (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2011). This is why the White Paper (1992) on the Education for National Integration and Development recommended that schools should maintain a cumulative record card on continuous internal assessment including class performance. Since then, teachers have continued to carry out continuous assessment in primary schools as often as possible and without waiting until the end of each term or year.

The education system of Uganda is examination-oriented and this has persisted since the 1960s up to date. All the teaching and learning is centred on passing final examinations. It is sometimes referred to as "teaching to the test" (Linn & Miller, 2015). This challenge is compounded even further by the fact that pupils' promotion or selection to another level is based on pupils' grades. In Kabale Municipality, teachers and pupils equally do a lot to prepare for the final examination. According to Kellaghan and Greaney (2011), that kind of assessment is subjective, informal, immediate, on-going, and intuitive as it interacts with learning as it occurs. For instance, teachers teaching primary seven are required to assess their students regularly using different assessment strategies so that learners could memorize the subject content taught to them during the final examinations. This is done so that pupils could perform highly in the final examinations. The downside of this approach is that pupils are encouraged to exercise rote memorization of facts

and cramming of information rather than acquiring problem-solving skills.

The National Curriculum Development Centre (2004) introduced continuous assessment as one of the basic educational principles of teaching and learning in lower primary school. It is part of the ongoing education reform process in Uganda where teachers are required to use individual child progress card to keep track of children's competence and performance. This is vital in creating a reliable picture of the learners' strengths and weaknesses as specified in the syllabuses. The pupils' academic performance is assessed by use of tests, assignments and examinations; and it is normal for pupils in primary school to perform well and others poorly, even after receiving the same services.

Assessment in thematic curriculum focuses more on what a learner can do than on what the learner knows or can remember. Assessment covers all competences ranging from oral, written to practical. Assessment indicators are shown at the end of each theme in thematic curriculum. Some the methods used to assess children in primary one include: direct observation, talking to individual children, oral and written questions, children's drawing and work they display, looking at children's exercise books, observing play and free activities, listening to children debates, group discussions, songs, games and acting.

Continuous assessment at middle and upper primary, that is primary four to primary seven; summative assessments is carried out in five subjects forming the following four papers, English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science and Social Studies with Religious Education at the end of each term, year and primary cycle (Kateeba, 2012). Summative assessment aims at providing a picture of learner's progress at any given point in time, e.g. Primary Leaving Examination (PLE).

Continuous assessment is the use of different approaches and evaluation tools in the process of assessing the learners such as texts, questionnaires, rating scales, observation and anecdotal records to obtain information on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning by children (Adebawale & Alao, 2018). Assessment in the cognitive is concerned with the process of knowledge and understanding. The affective domain is associated characteristics such as attitudes, motives, interests and other personality traits.

Assessment in the psychomotor domain involves assessing the learner's ability to use his or her hands such as hand writing, construction and projects (Adebowale & Alao, 2018). Teachers in Kabale Municipality focus their greatest attention on measuring head (cognitive) learning rather than the hand (affective) or psychomotor (heart), which is not the real essence of continuous assessment. Thus, continuous assessment becomes examination-centred.

Integrating continuous assessment in the Ugandan education curriculum is becoming a top priority encouraged at all levels of education, but it is challenging. Primary schools in Kabale Municipality have focused on providing Continuous Assessment to pupils as one of the ways to improve academic performance. It has become a challenge to some schools. The parents are unable to meet the costs of Continuous Assessment test and buying other requirements needed by a pupil to qualify for Continuous Assessment test.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Continuous Assessment Strategies used by Teachers**

Abonyi, Okereke and Omebe (2015) defined continuous assessment as a method of assessment in which the teacher periodically or intermittently ascertains what the learner has gained in terms of knowledge, thinking, reasoning, character learning activities using various instruments like tests, assignments, projects, observation, interviews and questionnaires. Continuous assessment demands that the teacher takes into consideration information obtained from all sources about the child. It is usually well focused by being closely related to what was actually taught. In fact, the feedback mechanism that forms part of it ensures that educational goals are attained. Continuous assessment is the use of different approaches and evaluation tools in the process of assessing the learners such as texts, questionnaire, rating scales, observation and anecdotal records to obtain information on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning by children (Adebowale & Alao, 2018). Assessment in the cognitive is concerned with the process of knowledge and understanding. The affective domain is associated characteristics such as attitudes, motives, interests and other personality traits. Assessment in the psychomotor domain involves assessing the learner's ability to use his or her hands, e.g. hand writing, construction and projects.

In primary schools, assessment of pupils' learning in the classroom has been an integral component of the teaching-learning process because there is much effort by the teacher to teach a lot of content to pupils. However, to Kellaghan and Greany (2011), that kind of assessment is subjective, informal, immediate, ongoing, and intuitive as it interacts with learning as it occurs. Although the main argument behind the adoption of continuous assessment is to avoid focusing all efforts, time and energy on exams, this is not true in Uganda. Teachers and pupils put their focus on final examinations called Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). This is because PLE results are an important determinant of future opportunities for secondary education. Since teachers' assessment of pupils' learning in the classroom plays a central role in the learning process of all pupils, it merits our serious attention.

### **2.2 Perception of Teachers on Continuous Assessment Strategies used in Primary Schools**

Crick (2016) suggests that a person's perceptions of the causes of success and failure are of central importance in the development of motivation for learning. Causes have three dimensions. The first is *locus*, whether causes are perceived to originate from within the person or externally. The second is *stability*, whether the causes are perceived to be constant or to vary over time. The third has to do with *controllability*, whether the individual perceives that she or he can influence the causes of success or failure.

According to Harlen and Crick (2017) and Harlen (2016), ability and effort are two frequently used causes of success or failure at a learning task. Both are internal to the learner, but perceptions of their stability and controllability vary among learners and teachers. Learners who attribute success to ability, which they perceive as stable and uncontrollable, are likely to respond negatively to summative assessment. Concomitantly, learners who attribute success to effort, and who perceive ability to be changeable and controllable are likely to deal with failure constructively, and to persevere with learning tasks.

In the USA, Brookhart and DeVoge (2015) studied teachers and a third-grade pupils' perception of assessment 'events' taking place in the course of regular classroom work. Four different classroom assessment events were selected in each class in consultation with the teachers. They used different methods to investigate pupils' perceptions of their ability to do the task, their effort, and their attainments. Pupils' self-efficacy judgements about their abilities to do particular classroom assessments were based on previous experiences with similar kinds of classroom assessments. Results of previous spelling tests, for example, were offered as evidence of how pupils expected to do in the current spelling test. Pupils used judgemental feedback from previous work as an indication of how much effort they needed to invest. However, Brookhart and DeVoge (2016) noted that pupils who are sure that they will succeed in the work may put effort into it, which depends on their goal orientation -- that is, whether they have learning or performance goals. Those who see goals as performance may apply effort, if this is how they will be judged, in order to gain approval. Formative feedback is crucial

to further learning; judgemental feedback might influence future learning through pupils' use of it as evidence of their capability to succeed at a particular kind of assessment. In addition, teachers' explicit instructions and how they present and treat classroom assessment events affect the way pupils approach the tasks. Furthermore, research indicates that pupil with learning goals show more

evidence of superior learning strategies, have a higher sense of competence as learners, show greater interest in school work and have more positive attitude to school than do pupils with performance or attainment goals (Harlen and Crick, 2017).

### 2.3 Impact of Continuous Assessment Strategies on Academic Performance

According to Onuka (2012), there is a need to use a variety of instruments to effectively measure the students' traits and their results are used to assist the students to improve themselves. In addition, Lewin (2011) recorded that, over the years, various attempts have been made in many

countries to improve the quality of examinations through the continuous assessment provisions. For example, in Tanzania, the National Examination Council for Tanzania (NECTA) in the late

1970s established continuous assessment programmes to monitor academic progress in the whole education cycle from lower classes to higher classes. Ezeudu (2013) quotes Shinto et al. (2011) that in Nigeria, continuous assessment was used in geography and out of the 30 geography teachers interviewed, 28 per cent of them used oral test, 100 per cent used written test while 97 per cent used assignments and 100 per cent also used examinations as their mode of assessment.

Like in Tanzania and Nigeria, continuous assessment is being practiced in many Ugandan primary schools. It is not uncommon for teachers to carry out day-to-day testing of learners. In many schools, regular testing takes place on weekly, fortnightly, monthly, mid-termly, termly and yearly basis. This is further evidenced with what Etienne (2012) noted in Mauritius that, only for purely organizational reasons, some teachers might be brought to do continuous assessment during the beginning of first term. This is similar to Uganda's Beginning of Term

(BOT) tests in some primary schools. Besides testing, assignments and recap exercises are other forms of continuous assessment strategies sometimes used in primary schools.

According to Farrant (2011), continuous assessment is being used increasingly as a strategy to prepare pupils for terminal examinations. For instance, the results obtained from continuous assessment can be used to identify the pupils' weak areas so that teachers can give them special

support in those areas. Continuous assessment results can also inform decision-making in terms of determining as to whether pupils should be promoted from one class to another. Continuous assessment or schools-based assessment should test the total growth of the pupils in the non-scholastic areas and therefore should be built into the teaching-learning process (Graume & Naidoo, 2014). This implies that helping pupils acquire the needed knowledge and skills would require changes in the public examination system and assessment techniques at the schools and classroom levels.

In Nepal, continuous assessment is used in the promotion process or as an indicator of school quality (Carnoy, 2013). Continuous assessment is also used to provide teachers with feedback about pupils' performance and achievement. In Uganda, excellence in the national external examination has also become the top priority of teachers and school administrators. Therefore, teachers have had to rely on continuous assessment in order to monitor their pupils' academic progress and performance. This is what Webb and Brairs (2010) argued that assessment must be an interaction between the teachers and the pupil, with teachers continually seeking to understand what a pupil can do and how a pupil is able to do it and then using this information to guide instruction. However, despite the central role of continuous assessment in enhancing the teaching-learning process, we do not know a great deal about how teachers continuously assess their pupils in primary schools in Kabale Municipality.

Continuous assessment helps a teacher in making decisions about what to teach, how to teach and what learning materials to be used. This is in line with Kateeba (2012) who, in the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) Primary curriculum implementation Guidelines and assessment specifications said that the purpose of continuous assessment helps in making decisions about what to teach, how to teach and what learning materials and activities should be included. The actual practice of continuous assessment by teachers of Ibulanku Sub-County were: weekly or monthly tests, exercise, individual, group assignment and end-of-term examination were the most commonly used assessment methods at the end of each unit. But according to Linn and Miller (2015), paper and pencil tests are not the only assessment technique to assess the full range of students' information about learning. There is a need also to assess the psychomotor and affective domain of learner's development.

Kakinda (2014) states that learners at all levels in Uganda are taught for many years seven for primary, four for O-Level and two in A-levels and yet they are examined for only a few days. This means that their academic competence is measured by what they are able to write in those few examination days. Teachers take a lot of time training students to pass examinations so that their schools can be ranked among the best in the country. But this comes at a cost of failing to develop students' other abilities like practical skills in different areas, life skills, talents and

moral values.

Continuous assessment encourages the teachers to implement the designed instruction objectives as well as to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of the individual children and to apply corrective actions when lack of progress is observed (Ogunnyi, 2014). In addition, Ahukanna, (2016) calls assessment a discovering point, which needs hammering, and repetition. Questions which were poorly done in the previous test should be repeated, but differently. Continuous assessment helps a teacher to obtain a true picture of the child's ability that would be obtained from a single assessment. In addition, Continuous Assessment places teachers at the centre of all performance assessment activities given to the learners and, being the most extensive means of assessment, has sustained influence on teaching and learning and improves the quality of students' learning achievements. According to Alausa (2014), the various dimensions of learning activities of the learners should be assessed by various methods. The understanding is that the variety of assessment strengthens the quality of education and fulfils the weaknesses of each assessment technique.

### 3.0 Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

Kothari (2004) defines research design as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data that aims at combining relevance to the research purpose with economy procedure. The researcher adopted a cross-sectional survey design. A cross-sectional research design is type of design that helps one to collect data from a large number of cases at a particular point in time (Sekaran, 2009). Cross-sectional design was used because it was appropriate for collecting data from a sample of respondents at one point in time and it allowed the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data as open-ended questions were included in the research tools (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to support the research design. Qualitative approach was of particular importance to this research because of its ability to penetrate into the different expressions and experiences of respondents to the subject matter. The quantitative approach was used to establish the magnitude of the problems using statistical data and evidence (Amin, 2005).

#### 3.2 Sample size

A sample size is a set of respondents selected from the target population for purposes of a survey

(Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

Five primary schools in Kabale Municipality were purposively selected. Among these schools, four were privately owned primary schools and one was a government-aided school. The reason for this selection was that the majority of primary schools are privately owned. However, all these schools in the sample had comparable teaching facilities, teaching staff and school environment.

The researcher used a sample size of 200 respondents that was drawn from the population of 400 of the five selected schools. The sample size was determined using Israel Glenn's

formulan=
$$\frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$
 developed in 2012 where n is the sample size being investigated, N is 400

which is the study population while  $e^2$  is the level of precision which is 0.05.  $n = \frac{400}{1+400(0.05^2)}$   $n = \frac{400}{1+400(0.0025)}$   $n = \frac{400}{2}$



**Table 3.1: Distribution of Sample Respondents**

Schools	Category	Population	Sample size	Total sample size
Kabale Quality Primary School	Head teacher	1	1	26
	Teachers	12	5	
	Pupils	60	20	
Bishop Asili Primary School	Head teacher	1	1	34
	Teachers	16	5	
	Pupils	80	28	
Kikungiri Primary School	Head teacher	1	1	36
	Teachers	13	5	
	Pupils	90	30	
Child Africa Primary School	Head teacher	1	1	39
	Teachers	18	5	
	Pupils	97	33	
Canan Primary School	Head teacher	1	1	35
	Teachers	12	5	
	Pupils	87	29	
<b>Total</b>		<b>400</b>	<b>200</b>	

**Source: Records from the selected schools**

### 3.3 Data Type and Sources

Kothari (2010) recommend that before a researcher decides on the data collection methods, he or she should bear in mind both secondary and primary data. The researcher collected data from both secondary and primary sources using a mixed methodology for triangulation purposes during the various phases of the study (Patton, 2002).

Secondary data was collected from textbooks, journals, government reports, academic performance reports, unpublished theses and the internet. Secondary data was gathered from existing literature on continuous assessment and academic performance of pupils in primary schools. Secondary data was also collected through documentary reviews in order to establish the existing level of knowledge on continuous assessment and academic performance in primary schools in Kabale Municipality. Documentary reviews help to substantiate primary data with other sources of information in order for the researcher to gain insight in the area of study and beef up discussion (Patton, 2002).

Primary data was generated from field findings and the main primary data collection instruments employed by the researcher were interview guide and questionnaires.

The researcher also used the interview guide through oral verbal interactions with purposively selected head teachers in a structured way to minimize on time wastage. Structured interviews require lesser skill, are more economical and provide room

for inference. Since interviews allow flexibility, it enabled the researcher to adjust the interview to meet the diverse situations in the field. Interviews allowed explanations of meanings to the questions to eliminate ambiguity and provided an opportunity for the respondents and the researcher to correct any misunderstanding, and in-depth information search through further investigation of the responses that served the purpose of triangulation. Collection of data was also done through questionnaires. The researcher prepared questionnaires containing several questions concerning the objectives of the study and gave them to the respondents who wrote down the answers in the spaces provided in the questionnaire itself, which made it more economical and convenient (Amin, 2005).

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments**

The main data collection instruments in this study were structured interview guide, questionnaires and documentary review guide. The researcher used these three types of instruments for purposes of triangulation and they were developed on the basis of the study objectives and the conceptual framework. Researchers (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Bryman, 2006) recommend the use of multiple instruments to provide a wealth of data that meets the objectives of the study and enhance the extent to which the study findings can be trusted and generalizations made from them.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

#### **3.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis**

Data collected from the field was examined for its accuracy and completeness of information given. It was cleaned, sorted out and entered into the SPSS computer software Version 20.0, explored and analysed. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean square, and standard deviation were used to generate reports for discussion. Regression coefficient was employed to determine the magnitude of effect of continuous assessment on academic performance of pupils in primary schools. Frequencies and percentages were used because they easily communicate research findings to the majority of the readers. Frequencies easily showed the number of times a response occurred and the number of respondents in a given category while percentages were used to inform the comparison of the sub groups that differ in size and proportion. Frequencies and percentages were used because they easily communicate research findings to the majority of the readers. Frequencies easily showed the number of times a response occurred and the number of respondents in a given category, while percentages were used to inform the comparison of the sub groups that differ in size and proportion (Gay, 1992).

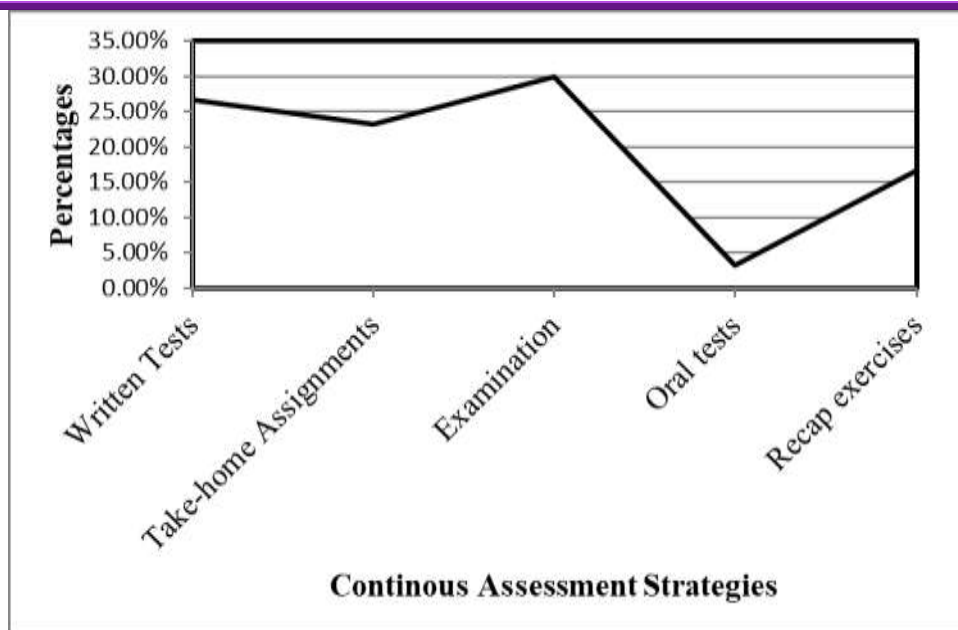
#### **3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis was done through thematic content analysis as was recorded during face-to-face interview. I used a quick impressionist summary in analysing qualitative data. I summarized key findings by noting down the frequent responses of the respondents during the interview on various themes concerning the effect of continuous assessment on academic performance of pupils' in primary schools. This technique of qualitative data analysis was chosen because it saves time and it is not very expensive. Interviews were listened to attentively, in order to identify the emerging themes and through sorting, recording, reflection and interpretation of the meaning of data (Souza, 2009).

## **4.0 Data Presentation, Analysis And Discussion Of Findings**

### **4.1 Continuous Assessment Strategies**

**Figure 4.3: Teachers and Head teachers Response on Continuous Assessment Strategies used**



From Figure 4.3, 30.0% of the respondents revealed that the mode of assessment they used was examination, followed by 26.7% who reported written tests, 23.3% of the respondents revealed take-home assignments, 16.7% of the teachers and head teachers reported recap exercises while

3.3% pointed out oral tests. The table shows that written tests, take-home assignments and examinations dominated the teachers' continuous assessment strategies. Oral tests were the less used strategy.

Findings regarding the frequency in use of continuous assessment strategies as gathered from head teachers and teachers are presented in Table 4.2;

**Table 4.2: Teachers and Head teachers Response on frequency in the use of Continuous Assessment Strategies**

Strategies	Very Often		Often		Not Often		Never	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Written Tests	8	26.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Take-home Assignments	7	23.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Examination	9	30.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oral tests	0	0	0	0	1	3.3	0	0
Recap exercises	0	0	5	16.7	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

From Table 4.2, 30.0% of the respondents very often used examination as a means of assessing pupils, 26.7% of the respondents very often used written tests, 23.3% noted that Take-home assignments were very often being used in assessing pupils, 16.7% reported that recap exercises were often being used while 3.3% reported that oral tests were not often being used.

The above findings concur with Dyson and Hick, (2015) who state that continuous assessment involves the use of classroom exercises, tests and homework/projects to gather numerical marks which are added to the end of term and year examination



to serve as pupils' records. The aggregated continuous assessment is calculated as 30% and added to pupils' final examination marks for the purpose of grading.

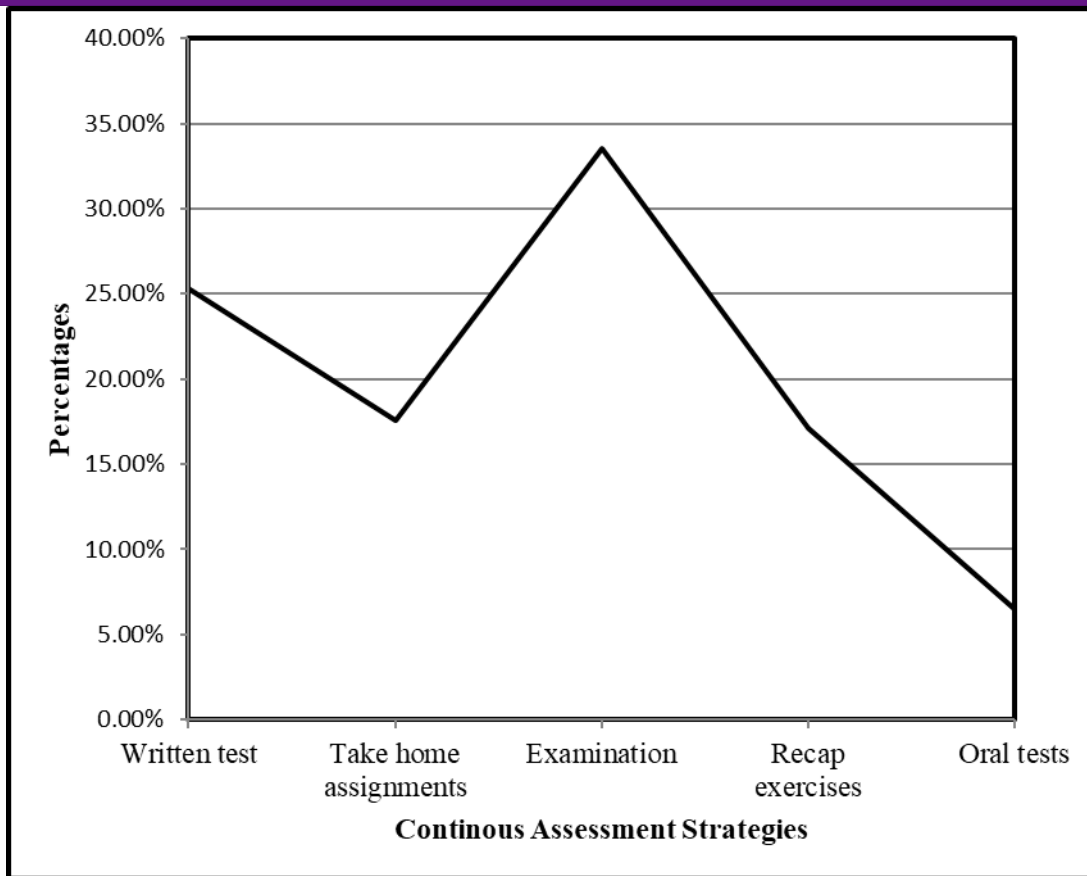
**Table 4.3: Teachers and Head teachers Responses on When they Used Different Continuous Assessment Strategies**

Period	Oral Tests		Written test		Take-home Assignments		Examination		Recap exercises	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Daily	0		0	0.0	10	33.3	0.0	0.0	8	26.7
Weekly	0		10	33.3	20	66.7	0.0	0.0	15	50.0
Monthly	0		0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7	23.3
Half term	0		20	66.7	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
Termly	0		0	0.0	0	0.0	30	100	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table 4.3, 33.3% of the respondents noted that written tests were done on weekly basis, while 66.7% respondents reported that written tests were done half termly, 33% respondents revealed that take home were done on daily basis, 66.7% revealed that take home assignments were done weekly and all the 100% respondents revealed that examination were done termly. In addition, 50.0% of the teachers and head teachers revealed that recap exercises were being used weekly, 26.7% indicated that they used recap exercises daily while 23.3% indicated that they used it monthly. The implication of the above findings was that written tests, take-home assignments and recap exercises were the most preferred continuous assessment strategies used by teachers in primary schools in Kabale Municipality.

In an interview with a head teacher, it was reported that, *“Teaching styles including teaching in contexts that might be personally meaningful to the pupils, class discussions, small group collaboration and valuing meaningful activity over correct answers enhance effective learning and academic performance among pupils in primary schools in Kabale Municipality”*. Furthermore, a variety of teaching methods and techniques were arguably being used by teachers to make their lessons easy to understand. Different teaching methods assisted pupils to understand the content of the subject easily.

**Figure 4.4: Pupils' Response on Continuous Assessment Strategies used**



From Figure 4.4, 33.5% of the pupils revealed that the major kind of assessment their teachers used was examination, 25.3% of pupils reported that written tests were used to assess pupils, 17.6% reported that take home assignments were being used, 17.1% of the pupils would also be subjected to recap exercises, while 6.7% reported the use of oral tests.

Pupils' responses concurred with those of their teachers and head teachers mainly on the use of written tests, take-home assignments and examination. The three strategies were more used than the rest of the assessment strategies. Furthermore, oral tests were not commonly being used by teachers according to pupils and in fact none of them responded about oral tests.

Findings regarding the frequency in use of continuous assessment strategies as gathered from pupils are presented in Table 4.4.  
**Table 4.4: Pupils' Response on frequency in the use of Continuous Assessment Strategies by Teachers**

Continuous Assessment	Very Often		Often		Not Often		Never	
Strategies	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Written Tests	43	25.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Take-home Assignments	30	17.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Examination	57	33.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Recap exercise	29	17.1	16	9.4	13	7.6	0	0.0
Oral tests	0	0	0	0	11	6.5	0	0.0

<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
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From Table 4.4, 33.5% of the respondents very often used examination as a means of assessing pupils, 25.3% of the respondents very often used written tests while 17.6% noted that take-home assignments were very often used in assessing pupils. More still, 9.4% of pupils reported that recap exercises were often being used, 7.6% reported that recap exercises were not often being used whereas 6.5% of pupils reported that oral tests were not often being used. The table indicates that oral tests were not commonly used by teachers, implying that pupils would not be given chance to think deeply and be creative and mental work was too little in the selected primary schools. This could probably be the cause of poor academic performance in some primary schools in Kabale Municipality

**Table 4.5: Pupils' Responses on when Continuous Assessment Strategies were used**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Oral Tests</b>		<b>Written test</b>		<b>Take-home</b>		<b>Examination</b>		<b>Recap</b>	
	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
Daily	20	11.8	0	0.0	70	41.2	0	0.0	70	41.2
Weekly	0	0.0	70	41.2	100	58.8	0	0.0	60	35.3
Monthly	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	40	23.5
Half term	0	0.0	80	47.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Termly	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	170	100	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table 4.5, 47.1% respondent noted that written tests were done on half term, 41.2% of respondents reported that written tests were done weekly, 58.8% respondents revealed that take home tests were done on daily basis, 41.2% revealed that take home assignments were done daily and all the 100% of respondents revealed that examination were done termly. Furthermore, 41.2% of the pupils who participated in the study reported that recap exercises were being used on daily basis to assess them, 35.3% of the pupils reported that recap exercises were being done weekly while 23.5% revealed that recap exercises were being done monthly. The table also indicates that 11.8% of the teachers and headteachers reported that oral tests were being used daily as a mode of assessment in primary schools. It was found that among all the continuous assessment strategies, oral tests were not commonly used by teachers because none of pupils responded to oral tests. The findings also concur with Graume and Naidoo (2014) who noted that up to high school level, the assessment of students was done through terminal, half yearly and annual examinations at the schools.

One head teacher in his own word stated that, *"In most primary schools in Kabale municipality, written tests, examinations and assignments were conducted daily, weekly, monthly and at the end of the term to improve on pupils' grades both in tests, examinations at schools and national exams"*.

Teachers and their pupils all agreed that continuous assessment strategies such as homework, tests and end-of-term examinations contributed to better performance although evidence shows

that this improvement in performance was mainly among private schools compared to government schools. A female teacher from one of the selected schools argued that:

*"Much as we assess all our using same tests, examinations, homework among others some of our pupils' do not perform very*

*well. We are trying our level best to encourage pupils but our effort is yielding very little success.”*

#### 4.2.2 Impact of Continuous Assessment on Pupils' Academic Performance

The findings of the teachers and head teachers about the impact of continuous assessment on pupils' academic performance are presented in Table 4.6;

**Table 4.6: Kabale Quality Primary Pupils' Results before and after Continuous Assessment**

Kabale Quality Primary				Kabale Quality Primary			
Before Continuous Assessment (Beginning of Term One Results 2019)				After Continuous Assessment (Mock Results 2019)			
DI	DII	DIII	DIV	DI	DII	DIII	DIV
15	53	20	9	33	52	10	2

Findings from Table 4.6 indicate that before Kabale Quality Primary subjected its pupils to continuous assessment, the academic performance was low unlike after when this assessment was done. For instance, in the beginning of term one results 2019, in a class of 97 pupils, 15 were in division one, 53 were in division two, 20 pupils were in division three while 9 pupils were in division four. This performance was attributed to the fact that pupils were not subjected to more continuous assessment strategies that would make them perform well in exams.

After subjecting pupils to continuous assessment, academic performance of pupils in Kabale Quality Primary School improved because pupils in division one increased from 15 to 33, pupils in division two showed a slight reduction from 53 to 52, pupils in division three reduced from 20 pupils to 10 pupils while in division four the number of pupils reduced from 9 to 2 pupils. This is an indication that there was a great improvement in pupils' academic performance in Kabale Quality Primary in Kabale Primary School which is a private school. This implies that continuous assessment built the whole mind of pupils as they prepared for mock examinations. The findings also imply that continuous assessment helped to identify the weak pupils and amelioration was done to improve on performance. The findings are in agreement with Farrant (2011) who stated that continuous assessment is being used increasingly as a strategy to prepare pupils for terminal examinations. For instance, the results obtained from continuous assessment could be used to identify the pupils' weak areas so that teachers could give them special support in those areas.

**Table 4.7: Kikungiri Primary School Pupils' Results before and after Continuous Assessment**

Kikungiri Primary School				Kikungiri Primary School			
Before Continuous Assessment (Beginning of Term One Results 2019)				After Continuous Assessment (Mock Results 2019)			
DI	DII	DIII	DIV	DI	DII	DIII	DIV
00	8	38	20	2	20	19	25

Table 4.7 indicates that Kikungiri Primary School which is a government school did not have pupils in division one and most pupils were in division three and four before students were subjected to continuous assessment. After subjecting pupils to continuous assessment, the school got two pupils in division one, 20 pupils were in division two, 19 pupils were in division three while the majority were in division three. The findings imply that pupils in Kikungiri Primary School, which is a government school, underwent thorough continuous assessment like that of Kabale Quality Primary School which is private. So there was an improvement in academic performance of pupils. In other words, Kabale Quality Primary School (Private) performed better than Kikungiri Primary School (government school). The implication is that the more the continuous assessment strategies in a school, the better the academic performance of pupils and the less the continuous assessment the lower the academic performance.

In an interview with head teachers, it was reported that:

*"The practice of continuous assessment made pupils concentrate on their studies, devoted most of their time on revising their books because they knew they were going to sit end of term examinations".*

A head teacher of one of the selected primary schools attested that *"continuous assessment reduced the examination fears and increased their interaction with the teachers which would contribute to pupils' better academic performance"*

One head teacher also asserted: *"You see, some pupils are day scholars which means, they commute from home. The challenge here is that when some pupils return to their homes with assignments, they rarely get the time to complete them due to domestic chores such as cooking, and fetching water"*. These domestic responsibilities are without any doubt, a main cause of poor performance among pupils who were day scholars.

The head teacher reported that, *"the way teachers present and treat classroom assessment events affect the way pupils approach the tasks"*. Furthermore, the head teacher asserted that *"pupil with learning goals show more evidence of superior learning strategies, have a higher sense of competence as learners, show greater interest in school work and have more positive attitude to school than do pupils with performance or attainment better grades"*.

A head teacher also reported that:

*"Pupils learnt answering techniques and question approach methods through continuous assessment and got ready for the final exams which helped them to obtain better grades in examinations"*. She also asserted that *"through written tests pupils were informed of their main weak areas which helped them to devise ways of improving on their performance"*.

One of the head teachers noted that pupils were subjected to written tests which contained questions selected from various topics already learnt after a given period of time. Therefore, when pupils failed the questions, they could easily be forced to revise more. Other contributions that came true of the written tests were the increase in concentration, improvement in writing speed and handwriting, and reduction in examination fear. However, in some schools, especially government primary schools, written tests are neither shown to be reducing the fear of pupils for final examinations nor reinforcing pupils to read more. Therefore all schools need to embrace continuous assessment and they should do this daily, weekly, monthly and at the end of the term to increase academic performance of pupils.

The findings are in agreement with Ogunnyi (2009) who states that continuous assessment also provides the pupils with maximum opportunities to learn and to demonstrate from time to time the knowledge, the skills and the attitudes that they have during the teaching-learning process.

One head teacher reported that:

*"Take-home assignment was the best strategy for helping pupils to learn than the question-answer approach. These take-home assignments assisted them to develop a good revising habit"*. *"He further added that assignments enabled pupils to get exposed to a variety of questions more often and when given prompt feedback from teachers, pupils were able to learn the best ways of approaching questions and presenting their answers"*. Therefore, continuous assessment positively relates to pupils' performance. Take-home assignment was found out not to help much with students the mastering content they were taught.

It was reported by a head teacher that:

*"Group discussions was kind of continuous assessment which was considered a good practice especially for improving the performance of pupils and in monitoring their progress though they were not used teachers"*. *"The teacher contended that every aspect of performance of a pupil on a continuous assessment strategy is challenging to the teacher to seek ways of improving it"*. Therefore group discussions should be used in primary schools and teachers should always encourage pupils to form groups and they should be provided with textbooks and questions for discussion in an effort to improve academic performance.

The factors that affected continuous assessment in primary schools in Kabale Municipality were reported. Teachers reported that the large class sizes in most schools were major challenge. Teachers indicated that the workload became higher as they were required to mark and keep records of the progress of all learners. It was also observed that despite the intensive in-service training and the availability of the guidelines encouraging teachers to practice continuous assessment. A good number of teachers in the pilot schools continued to practice continuous testing by administering assessment or tests at the end of the first month and the end of the second month. A good number of teachers failed to appreciate the need to administer assessments on an on-going basis such as weekly, fortnightly or after a topic.

One teacher reported that:

*“Teachers complained that they had inadequate teaching and learning materials. The difficulty with learning materials mainly affected the availability of appropriate teaching and learning materials in new curriculum. It was clear that they needed a lot of support in form of learning materials to boost academic performance”.*

One head teacher asserted that:

*“Teachers should be trained on how to conduct continuous assessment and should be encouraged to do it very often as this would increase pupils’ ability to grasp what has been taught. According to my seven years’ experience in this school continuous assessment improved academic performance of pupils not only in tests and end of term examinations but also in national examinations. It also encourages positive discussions and the development of right attitudes to knowledge and life in general”.*

The assertion by the head teacher above is supported by an interview result from another head teacher. He linked lack of learning resources to teachers’ failure to conduct continuous assessment and argued that they were the main cause of poor performance in national exams.

Specifically, he reasoned that:

*“Our schools have inadequate education facilities such as mathematic, English and Integrated science textbooks. When I took over leadership three years ago, this problem was compounded by staff turnover. With this, you cannot expect good academic performance. Also, most of our pupils come from poor socio-economic family background and cannot afford buying their own learning resources and often perform poorly in national examinations”.*

Additionally, it was reported by some teachers that instructional method, availability of resources and class size play a major role in determining the achievement by pupils. Furthermore, it was reported by teachers that teacher-pupil ratio was often considered as an important indicator of the quality of education. The basic assumption was that a low ratio meant small classes enabling teachers to pay more attention to individual pupils.

All the teachers who participated in this study reported that there was high pupil-to-teacher ratio and as such, some of them resorted to teacher-centred methods of instruction to ease their work. For the classes with low enrolment, pupils reported that teaching was more effective because the teachers gave them enough attention

It was also revealed by a head teacher that, *“For learning to take place effectively and for pupils to become successful, they should be ready and motivated to use the learning materials offered by their teachers”.* No learning will take place unless the pupil is willing and committed. No potential will be realized unless the pupil responds to a challenge. No matter how good the curriculum, how cognitively correct the teaching methods, unless the teacher is able to motivate his/her pupils to stimulate them about their teaching and make commitment in it, he/she will have given them little of lasting importance.

## 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study established that there existed a significant positive relationship between continuous assessment (assignments and exercises) and pupils’ academic performance in primary schools in Kabale Municipality.

The study established that when continuous assessment was used for diagnostic purposes, it improved the academic performance of pupils and enabled them to understand the contents of the subject better. At the same time, continuous assessment such as the use of written tests served as a basis for finding out the sources of difficulties on the contents of a subject. In this way, the teacher



was able to give necessary remediation and corrective measure to improve the understanding of the pupils on the contents of the subject in order to improve their academic performance. This was because through continuous assessment strategies, teachers tended to realize their own weaknesses in teaching and those of their pupils and strived to ameliorate them.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Good application of continuous assessment using different strategies would help in moving towards accomplishing learning objectives and restoring greater confidence in the class and school systems.

The Ministry of Education and Sports should put in place regulations, checks and balances to ensure that different continuous assessment strategies are used both in government-funded and privately-owned primary schools. A uniform policy on this practice should be emphasized so that all schools benefit from it.

Given the complexity of classroom assessment and evidence relating to teachers' skills and practice in this area, there is an obvious need for the development of infrastructure to support the improvement of its quality. Therefore, regular training seminars/workshops should be constantly organized for teachers to update their knowledge of the process involved in the implementation of continuous assessment to further boost the realization of learning objectives as room still exists for improvement.

School administrators should emphasize to teachers on regular basis that teaching should be carried out by providing regular formative assessment for regular diagnosis of pupils' learning difficulties on the contents of the subject, adequate feedback and remediation for learners to improve their academic performance.

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