

Influence of Continuous Assessment in Enhancing Academic Achievement of Students in Tertiary Education Institutions in Ondo State, Nigeria

AUTHOR(S): AKINNODI Phillips Akinrotimi (PhD),
AKINGBADE Olumide

Abstract

This research work investigated the influence of continuous assessment in enhancing academic achievement of students in tertiary education institutions in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. The rationale of the study is to examine the attitude of tertiary institution students toward continuous assessment; explore the perception of lecturer towards the attitude of students towards C.A, and examine the influence of continuous assessment on student's academic achievement. The survey design of descriptive research was adopted for the study. The research instrument used was an adapted questionnaire, which was administered to three hundred and fifty (350) students which was drawn using proportionate sampling technique and sixty (60) lecturers which was drawn using accidental sampling technique in Adeyemi Federal University of Education and Wesley University. The research hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and independent sampled t-test. It was discovered that; continuous assessment encourages regular study habits and engagement with the course content among students, continuous assessment is a fair method for evaluating students, provides a more comprehensive evaluation of student knowledge compared to traditional exams and enhances students' overall learning experience and there is a positive relationship in the significant between students' academic achievement and continuous assessment; $r_{(348)} = .538^{**}$, $P < 0.05$; also, there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female lecturers towards students' attitude to continuous

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assessment (348) = 2.002, $p > 0.05$. On the basis of the findings of this study, it was recommended that tertiary education institutions should develop and implement comprehensive policies that emphasize the integration of continuous assessment into the overall assessment framework. Also, tertiary institutions should establish a systematic review mechanism to periodically assess the effectiveness of continuous assessment methods employed.

Keyword: Continuous Assessment, Academic Achievement, Tertiary Institutions, Evaluation, Influence,

**ABOUT
AUTHOR**

Author(s):

AKINNODI Phillips Akinrotimi (PhD)

Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria
akinodi4u@gmail.com

AKINGBADE Olumide

Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria
Akingbadeolumide@gmail.com

Introduction

The need to evaluate students after an effective teaching and learning process is necessary. To this end, educationist have introduced a method of evaluation known as continuous assessment, which forms an integral part of Nigerians new policy on education published in 1977 are revised in 1981, 1983, 1987 and 1989. The new policy stipulates among other things, the use of continuous assessment for students performances instead of using the orthodox single, end of course, of year, national or certificate examination.

Assessment of learning is not one time movement, it is a progressing process. It includes the procedure of checking on, reflecting and modifying the learning techniques in an arranged and cautious way. When assessment is carried out in classroom in an ongoing or continual way by the teacher, it is called continuous assessment (Samiullah & Anjum, 2017). In this process, observations are made time to time to collect data to determine the level of students' knowledge, understanding and performance.

Continuous assessment as its relates to students class was described by the Universal Basic Education Commission (2010) as the periodic measurement of students' progress in the process of teaching the curriculum content of a given course of study. The main focus of this form of assessment is to ensure that students do not wait till the end of a semester or a program before being evaluated. Continuous assessment has always been one means of measuring students' progress during a course of study. It also serve as modality for effective teaching and learning. In view of this, the National Policy on Education (2013) emphasized emphatically 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 individuals.

Continuous assessment is part and parcel of instructional process that has to be taken as a key tool in educational quality assurance endeavour. Similarly, continuous assessment focused on all instructional objectives of learning outcome, it at times do not provide a holistic description of the student's performance. This is because continuous assessment of students are not based on the same standard of scores and assessment instrument.

Academic performance is basically a reflection of a student's abilities, efforts and achievement. It is related to many intellectual activities and therefore, of equal importance in measuring of the abilities of the candidates (Obioma and Salau, 2010). In line with this, it could be assumed that academic performance is the index of general mental abilities which are response to test of different kinds. In academic institutions in Nigeria, standardized tests of different kinds are used, and the students' response to these standardized tests represent the academic performance of the students. According to Shoukat, Zubair, Fahad, Hamid and Awais (2013) the more the students are taught based on a broader set of abilities, the more diverse student achievement can be. In any case, education without standard is worthless and if education is to retain some relevance or worth, there should be a need for standardization (Aremu, 2011).

In the Nigerian educational system, two sets of assessments are used to evaluate the level of student's achievements. These are the Continuous Assessment (periodic course assessment) and the final examination assessment. This replaced the one short system of assessment, which was observed to have several shortcomings (Kapambwe 2010). Some of the

shortcomings are lack of diagnostic and guidance oriented properties, creation of emotional problems, low context coverage and high rate of examination irregularities.

According to Farooq, Chaudhry, and Berhanu (2011), continuous Assessment in the educational system serves several purposes, which include the following:

- i. To provide more valid and reliable assessment of the student overall ability
- ii. To enable teachers' to be more flexible and innovative in their teaching.
- iii. To provide basic guidance for students.
- iv. To reduce examination malpractice.

The Continuous Assessment policy requires that students' be assessed through both Continuous Assessment and terminal assessment to evaluate the progress and growth of students. Ysseldyke and Salvia (2011) asserted that Continuous Assessment takes account of the child's performances in tests, assignments, projects and other educational activities during a given period of term, semester, and year or during the entire period of an educational level. Teachers' often take crucial decision on the promotion of students to the next class, identification of students who need remedial help and for grading and certification of students.

Therefore, Continuous Assessment directly affects students' achievements that was why the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology trailing the same pathway of this exercise of Continuous Assessment and encouraging its practice observed that assessing the teaching/teaming process is an integral part of the curriculum in which the teacher must be fully involved. He further observed that it is an all-embracing exercise, which the learner should undergo throughout his schooling period. Continuous Assessment is therefore, a way of obtaining the most value assessment of the capabilities of a student. This is because it is an aggregate of all the achievement of a student from the beginning of the course to the end of it, which determines the final achievement.

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 lecturer 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 lecturer will mark any assessment task given to them and report same to them on time, and when they are also made to realize 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 (Faleye & Adefisoye, 2015).

Statement of the Problems

Monitoring of educational progress of students at all level is very important so as to ensure better or improved academic performance. Since the introduction of continuous assessment

system by National Policy on Education in early 1980s, there are many challenges associated with its use in practice and implementation. In almost every year during processing of computing examination results, lecturers have been seen turning in high continuous assessment marks of their students which does not correlate at all with their respective final examination course marks. Common to all these studies is the fact that continuous assessment allows for a diagnosis of the learners' learning difficulties. However, there are variations in the efficacy of the strategies adopted in the studies. In addition, some of the strategies are less applicable because of some obstacles inherent in mastery learning. Little has been done to determine effect of continuous assessment on tertiary institution students' performance. The purpose of continuous assessment is to assist in improving learning through administering of assignments and tests as the learning experiences increase before the end of semester examination is taken. As good as the purpose for which continuous assessment was initiated, some lecturers/students complain of the drudgery of so many variant of structured and unstructured test and the teachers see the conduct of so many tests as extra work and burden. As a result, the main purpose of continuous assessment is gradually being lost. It is in the light that this research work is conducted to investigate the influence of continuous assessment in enhancing the academic achievement of students in tertiary institutions in Ondo West Local Government Area, Ondo State.

Objectives of the Study

In view of the above, the study was directed towards achieving the following;

- i. Ascertain the attitude of tertiary institution students toward continuous assessment,
- ii. Seek the perception of lecturer towards the attitude of students towards Continuous Assessment
- iii. Establish how continuous assessment influence the academic performance of students.
- iv. Find out the major problems militating against the use of continuous assessment in tertiary institutions

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study

1. What is the attitude of tertiary institution students toward continuous assessment?
2. What is the perception of lecturer towards the attitude of students towards C.A?
3. What is the influence of continuous assessment on student's academic performance?
4. What are the problems militating against the use of continuous assessment in tertiary institutions?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated and tested at .05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and academic achievement of students

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female lecturers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment.

Methodology

Descriptive Survey design was adopted for this study. The design entails the collection and use of data systematically from a given population to describe certain features of the population. The design is considered appropriate for this study being that the research work is intended to collect data from small group with view to describing the entire population.

The target population of the study comprised of all the tertiary institutions in Ondo West Local Government Area. The accessible population consisted of Adeyemi Federal University of Education and Wesley University. Three hundred and fifty (350) students and sixty (60) lecturers constituted the sample size for this study. The two tertiary institutions mentioned above were drawn, in which proportionate sampling technique was used to draw 350 students from the two institutions sampled. Accidental sampling technique was used to draw 60 lecturers from the two institutions. A questionnaire titled 'Perception of Teachers on Influence of Continuous Assessment on Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (PTICAAPSQ) adopted from Falaye and Adefioye (2016) was used to collect data and a self-developed questionnaire with a Likert-scale response format. Secondary data such as records of continuous assessment of students was being used. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was carried out. The questionnaire was administered on twenty five students of Adeyemi College of Education. The responses of the subjects on the two administrations were obtained and correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistical tool for test retest reliability in which an index of 0.74 was obtained. The researcher personally visited the schools and administers the questionnaire to the respondents. They were administered and retrieved from the four hundred and ten (410) respondents immediately. Data gathered to answer the research questions raised was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count percentage, mean and standard deviation while the research hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and independent sampled t-test.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of tertiary institution students toward continuous assessment?

Table 1: Students' Responses to the attitude toward continuous assessment

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	St.D	Decision
	Continuous assessment:							
1.	is a fair method for evaluating students' understanding.	234(66.9%)	85(24.3%)	21(6%)	10(2.8%)	3.55	.540	Agreed
2.	provides a more comprehensive evaluation of student	108(30.9%)	165(47.1%)	54(15.4%)	23(6.6%)	3.02	.608	Agreed

	knowledge							
3.	enhances student overall learning experience	95(27.1%)	199(56.9%)	41(11.7%)	15(4.3%)	3.07	.572	Agreed
4.	I feel more accountable for my learning When continuous assessment is part of the course	159(45.4%)	96(27.4%)	79(22.6%)	16(4.6%)	3.14	.571	Agreed
5.	motivates me to stay engaged with the course material throughout the semester	86(24.6%)	137(39.1%)	94(26.9%)	33(9.4%)	2.79	.630	Agreed

Source: Field Survey 2024

N=350: Decision Mean = 2.50; Disagree (< 2.5); Agree (>2.5)

Key: (SA) Strongly Agree; Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

The analysis of data on Table 1 by percentage points revealed the attitude toward continuous assessment; strongly agree (66.9%), agree (24.3%), disagree (6%) and strongly disagree (2.8%) to respond that continuous assessment is a fair method for evaluating students with mean of 3.55 and St.D of .540. Also, 30.9% strongly agree. 47.1% agree and 22% disagree that provides a more comprehensive evaluation of student knowledge compared to traditional exams while 27.1% and 56.9% strongly agree and agreed that enhances student overall learning experience and 11.7% and 4.3% strongly disagree. On the basis of I feel more accountable for my learning when continuous assessment is part of the course, 45.4% and 27.4% agree while 27.2% disagree with mean of 3.14. Lastly, 24.6% and 39.1% strongly agree and agree that continuous assessment motivates me to stay engaged with the course material throughout the semester while 26.9% and 9.4% disagree and strongly disagree, respectively.

Research Question Two: What is the perception of lecturer towards the attitude of students towards continuous assessment?

Table 2: Lecturers' Responses to towards the attitude of students towards continuous assessment

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	St.D	Decision
1.	Your assessment of learners is based on the prescription of	40(67%)	20(33%)	-	-	3.45	.561	High

	institution							
2.	Lecturers receive sufficient training and support in implementing continuous assessment methods	4(7%)	22(37%)	20(33%)	14(23%)	2.70	.670	Low
3.	Continuous assessment allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of students' knowledge compared to traditional exams.	24(40%)	36(60%)	-	-	3.18	.617	High
4.	Continuous assessment is an effective method for evaluating students' understanding	14(23%)	32(53%)	10(17%)	4(7%)	2.73	.652	Low
5.	Time constraints always pose significant challenge in implementing Continuous assessment	22(37%)	34(56%)	4(7%)	-	3.15	.561	High
6.	Administrative procedures support effective implementation of continuous assessment	16(26%)	30(50%)	4(7%)	10(17%)	2.68	.670	Low
7.	Limited resources and materials make continuous assessment difficult to perform	14(23%)	32(53%)	10(17%)	4(7%)	2.73	.617	Low
8.	Test is my most preferred assessment tool	32(53%)	24(40%)	4(7%)	-	3.19	.652	High
9.	I use assignment in place of continuous assessment	14(23%)	32(53%)	10(17%)	4(7%)	2.78	.617	Low
10.	Class attendance/ participation is my Continuous assessment tool	24(40%)	36(60%)	-	-	3.19	.652	High

N = 60: Key: (SA) Strongly Agree; Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

Source: Field Survey 2024

The analysis of data on Table 2 by percentage revealed the perception of lecturers towards the attitudes of students towards continuous assessment. It was revealed that 67% of the lecturers selected strongly agree and 33% agreed that their assessment of learners is based

on the prescription of institution. Also, 7% strongly agreed and 37% agreed that Lecturers receive sufficient training and support in implementing continuous assessment methods while 33% and 23% disagree and strongly disagree with mean of 2.70. Meanwhile, 40% strongly agreed and 60% agreed that Continuous assessment allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of students' knowledge compared to traditional exams. More so, 23% and 53% strongly agree and agree that Continuous assessment is an effective method for evaluating students' understanding while 17% and 7% disagree and strongly disagree with mean of 2.73.

Furthermore, 37% and 56% strongly agree and agree that Time constraints always pose significant challenge in implementing Continuous assessment while 7% disagree. More so, 26% and 50% strongly agree and agree that administrative procedures support effective implementation of continuous assessment and 7% and 17% disagree and strongly disagree with mean of 2.86. And 23% and 53% strongly agree and agree that limited resources and materials make continuous assessment difficult to perform while 17% and 7% disagree and strongly disagree. Also, 53% and 40% strongly agree and agree that Test is my most preferred assessment tool while 7% disagree with mean of 3.19. Lastly, 40% strongly agree that Class attendance/participation is their continuous assessment tool while 60% agree with mean of 3.19.

Research Question Three: What is the influence of continuous assessment on students' academic achievement?

Table 3: Students' Responses to the influence of continuous assessment on students' academic achievement

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	St.D	Decision
	Continuous assessment:							
1.	encourages regular study habits and engagement with the course content	90(25.7%)	193(55.1%)	43(12.3%)	24(6.9%)	3.00	.741	Agreed
2.	motivates me to actively participate in class activities	129(36.9%)	172(49.1%)	27(7.7%)	22(6.3%)	3.17	.611	Agreed
3.	provide a more accurate representation of academic abilities than traditional exams	92(26.4%)	133(38%)	78(22.3%)	47(13.3%)	2.77	.598	Agreed
4.	has a positive impact on my overall academic achievement	120(34.3%)	188(53.7%)	28(8%)	14(4%)	3.12	.705	Agreed
5.	I feel more engaged with the course	115(32.9%)	157(44.9%)	48(13.7%)	30(8.5%)	3.02	.851	Agreed

material when continuous assessment is implemented								
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N=350: Decision Mean = 2.50; Disagree (< 2.5); Agree (>2.5)

Source: Field Survey 2024

The analysis of data on Table 3 by percentage points revealed the influence of continuous assessment on students’ academic achievement; strongly agree (25.7%), agree (55.1%), disagree (12.3%) and strongly disagree (6.9%) that continuous assessment encourages regular study habits and engagement with the course content with mean of 3.00 and St.D of .701. Also, 36.9%, 49.1%, 7.7% and 6.3% strongly agree, agree disagree and strongly disagree that continuous assessment motivates them to actively participate in class activities. More so, provide a more accurate representation of academic abilities than traditional exams is being agreed upon by 64.4% and disagreed upon by 35.6% with mean and St.D of 2.77 and .598, respectively. More so, 34.3% strongly agree and 53.7% agreed that continuous assessment has a positive impact on my overall academic achievement while 8% and 4% disagree and strongly disagree with mean of 3.12. Finally, 32.9% and 44.9% of the respondents strongly agree and agreed that they feel more engaged with the course material when continuous assessment is implemented while 13.7% and 8.5% disagree and strongly disagree with mean and St.D of 3.02 and .851, respectively.

Research Question Four: What are the problems militating against the use of continuous assessment in tertiary institutions

Table 4: Students’ Responses to the problems militating against the use of continuous assessment in tertiary institutions

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	St.D	Decision
1.	Continuous assessment methods are often unclear or confusing	76(21.7%)	98(28%)	131(37.4%)	45(12.9%)	2.59	.645	Agreed
2.	Limited feedback on continuous assessment hinders your understanding of your performance	106(30.3%)	162(46.3%)	55(15.7%)	27(7.7%)	2.99	.719	Agreed
3.	Continuous assessment puts additional stress on students	53(15.1%)	92(26.3%)	140(40%)	65(18.6%)	2.38	.612	Disagreed



4.	Insufficient preparation time is another challenge of continuous assessment	93(26.6%)	179(51.1%)	55(15.7%)	20(5.7%)	2.97	.636	Agreed
5.	Limited resources and materials hinders continuous assessment activities	37(10.6%)	92(26.3%)	152(43.4%)	69(19.7%)	2.28	.667	Disagreed

N=350; Decision Mean = 2.50; Disagree (< 2.5); Agree (>2.5)

Source: Field Survey 2024

Key: (SA) Strongly Agree; Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

The analysis of data on Table 5 by percentage revealed the problems militating against the use of continuous assessment in tertiary institutions. It was revealed that 21.7% and 28% strongly agree and agree that Continuous assessment methods are often unclear or confusing while 37.4% and 12.9% disagree and strongly disagree with mean of 2.59. Also, 30.3% and 46.3% strongly agree and agree that limited feedback on continuous assessment hinders your understanding of your performance while 15.7% and 7.7% disagree and strongly disagree. More so, 15.1% and 26.3% of the respondents strongly agree and agree that Continuous assessment puts additional stress on students while 40% and 18.6% disagree and strongly disagree with mean of 2.38. Furthermore, 26.6% and 51.1% strongly agree and agree that insufficient preparation time is another challenge of continuous assessment while 15.7% and 5.7% disagree and strongly disagree. Finally, 10.6% and 26.3% strongly agree and agree that Limited resources and materials hinders continuous assessment activities while 43.4% and 19.7% disagree and strongly disagree with mean of 2.28.

Hypotheses testing

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and academic achievement of students.

Table 5: PPMC showing relationship between the continuous assessment scores and academic achievement of students

Predictors	N	\bar{X}	St.D	df	r	Sig	P
Students' attitude	350	65.56	6.81		.538**	0.00	<0.05
Peer pressure	350	36.06	7.28	348			

**Correlation is significant at 0.01(2-tailed)

Table 5 shows the significant continuous assessment scores and academic achievement of students. The result revealed that there is a positive relationship in the significant between students' academic achievement and continuous assessment scores; $r_{(348)} = .538^{**}$, $P < 0.05$. Thus, continuous assessment scores moderately have significant influence on students' academic achievement. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that high continuous assessment scores lead to high level of students' academic achievement. Coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.289$) reveals that continuous assessment scores accounts for 28.9% change in the attitude of academic achievement of students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female lecturers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment

Table 6: Independent t-test summary showing difference in the perception on attitude of students towards continuous assessment of male and female lecturers

Variable	Religion	N	\bar{X}	St.D	df	t	Sig	P
Perception towards students' attitude	Male	144	33.04	4.208	348	2.002	.118	>.05
	Female	206	32.62	4.863				

Source: Field, (2024)

Table 6 reveals significant difference between the perception of male and female lecturers on attitude of students towards continuous assessment. The result shown that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female lecturers; $t_{(348)} = 2.002$, $p > 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that the gender does not influence the perception of lecturers on students' attitude towards continuous assessment.

Discussion

Research question one sought to find out the attitude of tertiary institution students toward continuous assessment. Information from Table 1 show that the student have positive attitude towards continuous assessment, it revealed that; Continuous assessment is a fair method for evaluating students' understanding, provides a more comprehensive evaluation of student knowledge and enhances student overall learning experience. It also provide motivation for students stay engaged with the course material throughout the semester.

Table 2 show the perception of lecturers towards the attitude of the students towards continuous assessment and also the various tools used by lecturers for continuous assessment programmes. It was drawn from the table that time constraints always pose significant challenge in implementing Continuous assessment but there are always enough resources to cater for continuous assessment which means resources does not pose challenge to the implementation of continuous assessment. It was also revealed that test and class

attendance/ participation is the most preferred assessment tool while assignment is rarely used. In supporting this assertion Idowu and Esere (2010) in their studies of continuous assessment practices in schools found out that most teachers fall short in the usage of different continuous assessment strategies because teachers restrict themselves to tests and attendance only.

Table 3 answered research question three on the influence of continuous assessment on the academic achievement. It was discovered that that continuous assessment has positive impact on the overall academic achievement of students, provide a more accurate representation of academic abilities, encourages regular study habits and motivate students to actively participate in class activities. This is in line with some advantages of using continuous assessment for performance improvement strategies deduced by Hilma (2012).

This mean that students are somewhat deprived of the opportunity to learn in groups by sharing their views, ideas and perceptions among themselves thereby promoting better academic performance and promoting positive learning attitude in students. The students perceived as indicated in table 5 that; limited feedbacks provided by instructors on continuous assessment hinder understanding of one's performance which makes continuous assessment methods often unclear or confusing. These, coupled with insufficient preparation time are the problems militating against the use of continuous assessment in tertiary institutions. It was revealed from the hypothesis testing that the gender does not influence the perception of lecturers on students' attitude towards continuous assessment. This finding is line with Adeneye, Awofala, Veronica and Babajide (2013) who also did not find significant difference between male and female perception towards continuous assessment.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that continuous assessment encourages regular study habits and engagement with the course content among students and also have positive impact on the overall academic achievement of students.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Tertiary education institutions in Ondo State should develop and implement comprehensive policies that emphasize the integration of continuous assessment into the overall assessment framework. These policies should clearly define assessment methods, frequency, and criteria to ensure uniformity and fairness across departments and disciplines.
2. Tertiary institutions should embrace modern technological tools and platforms to streamline the continuous assessment process. The development of online assessment systems, electronic grading, and feedback mechanisms can enhance efficiency, reduce administrative burdens, and provide timely feedback to students.
3. Educators should actively involve students in the assessment process by encouraging self-assessment, peer assessment, and reflective practices. This approach fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter, encourages a sense of ownership in learning, and contributes to improved academic performance.

4. Tertiary institutions should establish a systematic review mechanism to periodically assess the effectiveness of continuous assessment methods employed. This ongoing evaluation will help identify strengths and weaknesses, allowing for adjustments and improvements in line with the evolving needs of the academic environment.
5. Practical training in using continuous assessment should be provided to educators. For this, appropriate guidance should be provided to all lecturers at every institution.
6. For successful implementation of the continuous assessment, lecturers need to assess both cognitive affective and psychomotor domains of learning.

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