



INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLES OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT TOWARDS STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *This paper has investigated the role of continuous assessments towards students' performance in secondary school national examinations in Tanzania.*

Design/ Methodology/ approach: *The study used a quantitative approach and a survey design was deployed to collect secondary data. The data were collected from the field by using the documentary review method whereby the results of 250 students in the internal and National examinations were rationally reviewed and analyzed.*

Findings: *The findings of this study revealed that the internal examinations can predict the performance of students in their national examinations to some extent. In like with that, students' performance is also attributed to the competence of teachers, availability of teaching and learning materials, the time spent by the students themselves for self-studying and the quality of learning infrastructures like libraries and laboratories.*

Research Limitation/ Implications: *The study investigated the roles of continuous assessment towards students' performance in secondary school national examinations only in the Mpwapwa district out of 126 districts in Tanzania.*

Practical Implication: *The study informed education stakeholders about the contributing factors towards excellent and quality education in secondary schools. This study, therefore, poses a challenge to all education stakeholders not to rely on only the performance of students in their internal examinations in predicting their future performance in their national examinations as there are other factors.*

Social Implication: *Society knew its role in the preparation of children for better performance in their national examination which results from excelling in their internal examination.*

Originality/ Value: *The study has put open the roles and obligations of every education stakeholder towards students' performance in their national examination. In line with that, the study has identified the role of the government of Tanzania in secondary schools specifically creating a favourable learning environment as a means of raising students' performance in their national examination.*

Keywords: *Continuous assessment. examinations. secondary schools. students. Tanzania*

ISSN: 2408-7920

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GPA449-122017



1.0.INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study.

Internal examinations are those examinations that are being constructed and done inside the schools. In Tanzania, the internal examinations include mid-term, terminal and annual examinations. Furthermore in some schools, the weekly and monthly tests also are part of internal examinations. In most cases due to the changes in educational policies, these examinations are part of the continuous assessment reports due to their significance to show the academic progress of the students in their course of study. The internal examinations have many advantages when they are effectively and efficiently conducted in the schools. In Tanzania, the internal examinations have been conducted at various levels from pre-school up to the college levels of education due to their significances.

Internal examinations have become a window through which teachers, students and parents gauge the preparedness of students for final external examinations. Success in these examinations is seen as an incentive for learning and a return on investment (Olutola, 2015.), Byabato, & Kisamo, (2014) & Hayford, (2018). Internal examinations are the way of testing students' knowledge; this is because without conducting these examinations students will not concentrate properly in their lessons. Internal examinations are necessary for schools to find out the real skills, talents and knowledge of the students (Olutola, 2019; Faleye, Rufus, & Afolabi, 2016). Students will get motivation towards their studies to achieve in their examination. In this way, internal exams are very important for the studies as every person wishes to get the highest marks in the class and study hard to achieve his or her dream. This kind of attitude gives competition among the students and they study hard for achieving good results in exams (Saint, 2005).

Internal examinations teach students many things and give training to various things like punctuality, writing skills, timing sense, expressing their thoughts and opinions. With this examination method, students will get fear their exams and study their lessons properly to increase their knowledge as well as getting the highest marks in their classes (Olutola, 2019). Akindoju, Banjoko, & Jimoh (2010) argued that even though internal examinations are the core of academic issues in most schools in Tanzania, they are still facing many challenges. Some of these challenges are as follow; Lack of facilities that support the preparation of the examinations; in various schools, the facilities such as typewriters and computers that are very important for typing the examinations are not available. Due to such circumstances, the teachers are required to write those examinations by the use of hands before sending them to the stationary for typing and printing purposes. This practice is cost demanding and sometimes may lead to delaying in conducting of the internal examinations as scheduled by the schools. Ineffective supervision of



the teachers assigned the work of being supervisors of the examinations internally; this is because during conducting of internal exams the teachers do not put many restrictions on the students in the same way as that of supervising the mock and national exams.

The markable differences in performance of the students in various schools especially in the National examinations, people put many grievances to the teachers who seem to be irresponsible when a large number of students fail in the final examinations. Furthermore, elites are trying to focus on the other way round whereby the nature and quality of the examinations being constructed inside the schools themselves are being taken into consideration (Olutola, 2015).

Although much efforts have been made by the government to improve the performance of students in secondary schools including regular conducting of the internal examinations still there are many questions towards the supportiveness of these examinations to the student's performance in their final exams (focusing on the National examination) (Marlow, Venkata & Bhaskara 2011) & Ahukanna, Onu, & Ukah, (2012). Therefore, the extent to which these examinations support the student's performance in the National examinations is still unknown.

This study will assess the role of internal examinations towards the performance of students in the National examinations taking Mpwapwa district as a case study. The Objectives of this study were to compare students' overall performance in form four national examinations against form three annual examinations; to compare students' overall performance in form four national examinations against form three annual examinations for arts subjects (Kiswahili, History, English and Civics) and to compare students' overall performance in form four national examinations against form three annual examinations for science subjects (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Geography).

2.0. THEORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

The focus on test-preparation skills may also serve to make students direct their efforts towards mastering strategies to help them over the examination hurdle, rather than towards developing mastery of subject matter (Byabato, & Kisamo, 2014). During the examination schedules, students and teachers direct much of their efforts towards preparation for the exams. This habit tends to cause wastage of time for normal classroom instructions, which is meaningful in the learning process (Ahukanna, Onu, & Ukah, 2012).

Although various scholars have revealed that, continuous assessments are very important in enhancing the students' performance in their National examinations as far as learning is concerned; on the other way round, they try to point out some drawbacks of these assessments in many different aspects. The examinations as part of continuous assessment tend to create anxiety



for some students. This is because in most cases students have the desire to perform better in their examinations, this habit creates great tensions among the students, as a result, they normally learn as if they are being intimidated by their teachers in their learning processes (Lupeja, & Komba, 2021).

The examinations as part of continuous assessments may result in rote learning. This is due to the practices of some teachers who tend to provide many precautions to their students before the examination sessions concerning what will happen if students fail their exams. Upon having this habit, the teachers force the modality of students' learning to change from understanding to memorization, rehearsing and rote learning (Kellaghan, Madaus, & Raczek, 2013).

Continuous assessments help identify learning difficulties encountered by the students in their course of study. This is because through carrying the continuous assessment a teacher will exactly be in a position to realize at which sections of the lessons the students fail much especially by considering the performance of students on each question available in a quiz, test and examination (Kellaghan, & Madaus, 2010).

Continuous assessments are useful in guiding the facilitator to make decisions on whether he or she should move on with the lesson or revise the previous chapter basing on what is being observed from the student's performance in their day-to-day learning activities. If they excel in doing the exercises given to them by their teachers and facilitators then the facilitator will be in a position to move on with the next chapter, otherwise, he or she will be required to reveal the previous chapter. Upon taking such actions, the students gain much of the skills, knowledge as well as greater levels of understanding which in turn have great importance in their performance in future National examinations (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2013; Modup, & Sunday, 2015).

Furthermore, continuous assessments are useful in evaluating the learning that has taken place. This is because through internal assessments the teachers can determine how far the students have learned and at what level. For example, the teacher can explore the quality of learning that the students have attained over a certain period. Upon doing so he or she will be in a position to determine whether the level of learning attained, is sufficient for the students to compete for National wise unless there are some important issues to add. If this scenario will highly be upheld, students' minds will be sharp enough to make them capable to perform better when it comes to the National examinations (Thomas, Smees, Madaus, & Raczek, 1998). Alonge (2003) noted that continuous assessment (CA) is one of the internal evaluations which is a teacher-made test. Alonge (2003) defined continuous assessment CA as a mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in the cognitive-affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour systematically takes



into account all his performances during a given period of schooling. Continuous Assessment uses a variety of techniques for assessing the students because it considers all the three domains of learning, namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Apart from being formative in nature, a good Continuous Assessment system must be systematic, comprehensive, cumulative and guidance-inspiring or oriented.

Some of the advantages of continuous assessment are: It is used to determine student's level of knowledge, skill and understanding when the subject/course is on-going; it helps the teachers to know the next instructional step to take when the course is on-going; It is teacher-student driven; It aids students good study habits; It assists the teachers to understand the students level of mastery in a particular subject, and it also helps the teachers to guide their students on occupational choices (Modup, & Sunday, 2015; Mkimbili, & Kitta, 2020)

2.1. Conceptual Framework

The performance of students is being affected by both internal and external factors. The internal factors are the things inside the school itself that in one way or another may have impacts on the performance of the students in their National examinations. The internal factors include the availability of the learning materials around the school campus, coverage of the syllabus at a time, time spent by the students to study, attendance of the students to the class sessions, Quality of the internal examinations done at school as well as Student's attitude towards learning. The external factors are the things outside the school that may affect the performance of students in their National examinations including frequent fluctuation of the syllabus, parent's level of income, the location of the school, Family's day-to-day activities as well as Gender of the student. Figure 1 depicts the factors influencing the performance of students in the National Examination.

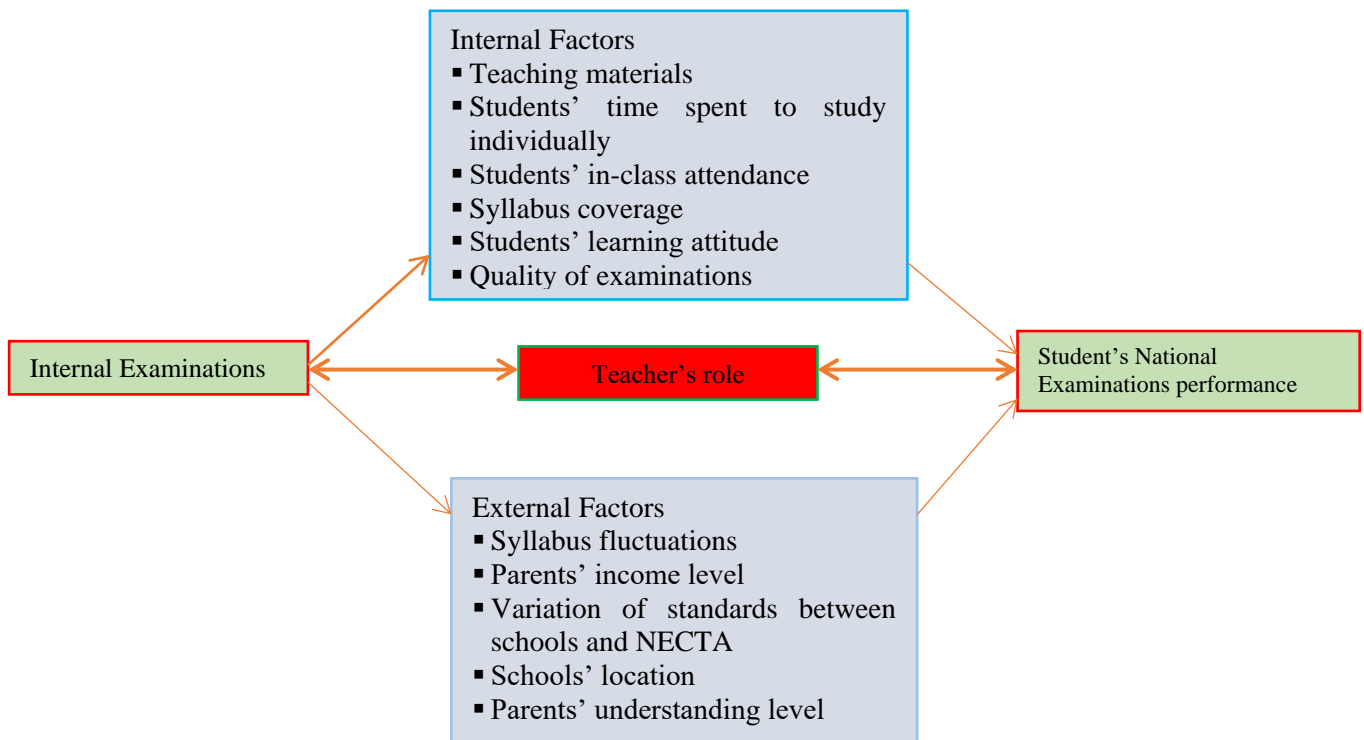


Figure 1: Factors influencing the performance of students in the National Examination

2.2. The relationship between literature review and knowledge gap

In the above literature review, it seems that various scholars have been doing their studies to reveal the contributions and the drawbacks of the continuous assessments in secondary schools specifically by considering examinations as part of such assessments. In most of the cases those studies have been done worldwide, continental wise as well as country-wise whereby some parts of Tanzania have been taken into consideration in investigating the advantages and disadvantages of continuous assessment partly through the continuous assessments. However various scholars have tried to narrate various issues concerning the continuous assessment in secondary schools, still, the extent to which these assessments support students to perform better in their National examinations at Mpwapwa district has not been revealed much. Therefore, this study will focus on investigating the role of continuous assessment in secondary schools particularly the significance of these assessments towards the performance of students in their National examinations at Mpwapwa district in Tanzania.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Approach and Design

In this study, a quantitative approach was used to assess the contribution of internal examinations towards the performance of students in their final national examinations in Tanzanian secondary



schools. A survey design was used to assist the collection of data from the targeted areas of the study. Due to its capacity to collect data from large samples Survey design was given the priority of being the major tool in assisting the process of data collection in this study.

3.2. Description of the case study area

The study was conducted at the Mpwapwa district found in the Dodoma region in the central part of Tanzania. The main areas where this study was conducted were the five selected secondary schools which include Ihala, Mpwapwa, Mount Igovu, Mwanakianga and Mazae secondary schools.

3.3. Targeted Population

The population anticipated in this study was the population of all educational stakeholders in Tanzania including parents, guardians, teachers, educational bodies as well as students themselves.

3.4. The study sample

The study sample consisted of students, teachers as well as educational officers who had relevant and accurate information concerning this study. It involved a total of 250 students, 5 teachers' particularly academic masters and mistresses from five secondary schools and 10 educational officers at ward and district levels who represented the entire population of educational stakeholders in Tanzania.

3.5. Sampling procedures

The sampling procedure for this study was purposive sampling. Such a method was used to obtain the results of 50 students from each targeted school for reviewing purposes. Those results were both from three annual examination results and from four national examination results. Moreover, purposive sampling was used to grab the attention of five academic masters from five secondary schools and 10 education stakeholders who provided some guidelines and permission to the researchers to collect data.

3.6. Methods and Instruments for Data collection

Methods for Data collection

In this study, the results of students in their form three annual examinations and from four national examinations were reviewed to make a critical follow up and comparison of their performances.



This shows that the main method that was used to collect data was the secondary data collection method whereby documentary review was the key player to collect data.

Instruments for Data collection

The main instrument that was used to collect suitable data for this study was a documentary review. In this case, the results of students were taken from academic offices and reviewed to have a picture of both national examination statistics and school-specific performance data which were helpful and useful in this study to accomplish the major purpose of the study which was to assess the role of continuous assessment in secondary schools in Tanzania towards the performance of students in their National examinations.

Validation of the instruments for Data collection

Personal efforts were made by the researcher to collect relevant and reliable information from the respondents to make this study meaningfully for the educational field. These efforts involved the techniques such as pilot study which helped make sure that the form four national examinations results, as well as the results of internal examinations from the intended secondary schools, were obtained successfully.

Data processing and Analysis

The data were edited to correct end errors if any then the process of coding was done. In the coding process, the answers were being assigned numbers and symbols so that they could easily be grouped into certain categories. After processing, the data were analyzed using simple linear regression and the results have been presented in chapter four.

Ethical considerations

During the entire process of conducting this study, the following issues were taken into consideration by the researcher: Permission from the Heads of schools was requested before even starting the process of collecting data. In addition, the use of polite and ethical language during any of the conversations done by the researcher in the field were highly observed. The confidentiality about those who assisted the acquisition of data in the field was also maintained, positive relationships with the respondents particularly of a different sex from that of the researcher were established, cultural constraints were also taken into account whereby the researcher did not engage in any action which implied distortion of culture.

40 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study covered, assessed the performance of students in Arts subjects, Science subjects as well as their overall performance. The findings on whether there is a relationship between the performances of students in their internal examinations against their National examinations is



presented in the following sessions:

4.1. Relationship between students' performances in internal examination against National examination for each subject in the year 2015/2016

The table below shows the summary of the findings of the performance of students in each subject in five different secondary schools found in Mpwapwa district in 2015/2016. The data were derived from the results generated by SPSS after running a simple linear regression model.

Table 1: Relationship between students' Performances in Internal Examination against National Examination for each subject in the year 2015/2016

S/N	Subjects	Unstandardized Beta - Value	Adjusted R - Square	P - Value
1	History	0.563	0.456	0.000
2	Kiswahili	0.366	0.265	0.000
3	Civics	0.567	0.590	0.000
4	English	0.857	0.543	0.000
5	Geography	0.704	0.399	0.000
6	Biology	0.591	0.306	0.000
7	Physics	0.658	0.697	0.000
8	Chemistry	0.793	0.661	0.000
9	Mathematics	0.796	0.515	0.000

It should be noted that the P-value shows that there is a significant relationship between the performance of students in their internal examinations and their performance in the National examinations. The unstandardized beta value shows the level of significance per unit increase in students' performance in internal examination to external examination. The adjusted R square value shows how far does students' performance in their internal examinations predict their performance in their national examinations.

The increase in performance of students in their internal examination by one (1) unit will lead to an increase in performance of students in their external National examinations by 0.563 for history subject. Moreover, their performance in internal examinations can predict performance in National examinations by approximately 46%. In this case, we see that the remaining 54% of the student's performance in their external National examinations can be predicted by the other factors different from the internal examination's performance. Those factors may include time spent by individual students in studying, level of income of the parents, frequency of engaging in remedial classes, distance from home to school for day scholars, perception of the students on the subject, quality of studying infrastructures such as library and laboratories, quality of teachers, parent's level of education as well as the nature of the society from where the student comes from.



Table 2: Relationship between students' Performance in Internal Examination against National Examination for Arts subjects in the year 2015/2016

Unstandardized Beta Value	Adjusted R Square	P-Value
0.542	0.410	0.000

It was observed that although there is a significant relationship between the performance of students in their internal examinations and their performance in their national examinations, performance of students internally for arts subjects can predict their performance externally by only 41%.

Table 3: Relationship between students' Performance in Internal Examination against National Examination for Science subjects in the year 2015/2016

Unstandardized Beta - Value	Adjusted R Square	P-Value
0.720	0.542	0.000

It was observed that although there is a significant relationship between the performance of students in their internal examinations and their performance in their national examinations, the performance of students internally for Science subjects can predict their performance externally by only 54%.

Table 4: Relationship between students' Performance in Internal Examination against National Examination for All subjects in the year 2015/2016

Unstandardized Beta Value	Adjusted R Square	P-Value
0.635	0.519	0.000

It was observed that although there is a significant relationship between the performance of students in their internal examinations and their performance in their national examinations, the overall performance of students internally for all subjects can predict their performance externally by only 52%.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

The study pointed out that the performance of students in their internal examinations can predict their performance in the National examinations to some extent. As it was observed that the



performance of students in the internal examinations for art subjects separately predicts their performance in the National examinations in the subjects such as history, civics, Kiswahili, English and geography. This situation was also observed for the case of science subjects whereby those students who performed well in the science subjects (Mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology) internally, were most likely to perform well in their National examinations. Finally, it was observed that the overall performance of students in their internal examinations predicted their performance in the National examinations.

However, the performance of students in their internal examinations alone does not predict the performance of students in their National examinations entirely as other factors also has a great significance on the performance of students in their National examinations. The factors such as competence of teachers of various subjects in secondary schools, availability of learning materials such as textbooks, supplementary books as well as learning infrastructures such as laboratories for the subjects that require practical sessions particularly science subjects including chemistry, biology and physics have great significance upon predicting the performance of students in their National examinations.

Furthermore, the time spent by the students in concentrating on searching knowledge on their subjects in their course of study has great significance in predicting their performance in the National examinations. In this case, those students who use most of their time to concentrate on searching knowledge on their studies have a great chance of passing not only their internal examinations but also their National examinations regardless of whether the subjects are arts or science subjects.

Generally, for the internal examinations to be meaningful and beneficial to the students, they should be conducted in such a way that their mode of supervision, marking criteria and standards of the examinations themselves match with that of the National examinations to the possible greatest extent. These will bring about reliable results for both internal and external examination performances of students.

5.2.Recommendations

The contribution of continuous assessments towards the performance of students in their National examinations in Tanzanian secondary schools poses a very great challenge to the school managers and educational stakeholders especially when there is a mass failure of students in their National examinations. Therefore the following recommendations should be highly considered to minimize and suppress the queries on the contribution of continuous assessments in Tanzanian secondary schools.

ISSN: 2408-7920

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Recommendation to students: Students should devote much of their time by concentrating in searching for knowledge on various subjects undertaken by them. By doing so they will gain a lot of concepts which are most likely to be helpful to them at the time they sit for their National examinations; Students should consider their internal examinations as they are the means of preparing their minds towards sitting for the national examinations; also students should not rely on preferential treatment from their teachers to score highest marks in their internal examinations. This will jeopardize their assessment in the sense that they will be regarded as high achievers while in reality, they are not.

Recommendation to Teachers in secondary schools: Teachers should conduct continuous assessments at a standard that will enhance students to pass their National examinations. This means that continuous assessments in secondary schools should not be done in such a way that they rely too much on preferential treatment to the students concerning the personal relationships between teachers and students in different aspects; teachers should sharpen their minds regularly to be as much competent as possible in their subjects of specialization. By doing so they will be in a good position upon guiding the learning activities of the students they teach. Also, teachers should be the main prescribers of which books are appropriate for the students. This will enable the students to find and use relevant books of various subjects and ultimately academic achievement for the students will be inevitable.

Recommendation to Parents: Parents should adhere to the principle that students are there to study. That is to say, parents should give their kids more time to study than doing any other activities at home such as fetching water, collecting firewood as well as feeding domestic live stocks; Parents should work hard to raise their standards of income. This will make them capable of buying various learning materials for their kids as well as affording to pay various educational related costs; *also* Parents should make an academic development follow up of their kids. This will ensure that parents are involved much in assessing the academic progress of students before even sitting for their National examinations. As such they will not shrug their shoulders unless their kids perform well in the National examinations because of being involved in every stage of their kid's academic progress assessments.

Recommendation to Government: The government of the united republic of Tanzania should launch educational policies that will ensure that the continuous assessments in secondary schools are done at a qualified standard. This means that the standard of assessments should be clarified in advance within our education policies; the government should ensure that there are no frequent fluctuations in education measures of assessments and evaluation. For example, changing from



divisions to GPA system and then back to the divisions in secondary schools; the government should continue to provide priority to the university students who pursue Educational courses to prepare a large number of teachers. On top of that, there should be a common curriculum for university students.

Recommendation for Further studies: the areas that are suggested for further studies are highlighted here:

- Assessing the Effects of frequent fluctuation of the measures of assessments (from divisions to GPA system and then back to divisions) towards the performance of students in both internal and external examinations.
- Assessing the effects of not having a common curriculum for all universities in Tanzania towards education success at lower levels (tertiary and secondary school levels)

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