

**CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN 'A'
LEVEL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
MASAKA DISTRICT**

BY

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DECLARATION

I Mwebaza Micheal, hereby declare that this is my original work and has never been presented to any university for the award of a masters degree.

Signed:

Date:

APPROVAL

I hereby certify that the dissertation titled “**Continuous Assessment and Students’ Performance in ‘A’ Level Secondary Schools in Masaka District**” is the original work of Mr. Mwebaza Micheal. This has been done under my supervision and is ready for submission for the award of a Masters degree of Curriculum, Instruction and Media Studies with my due knowledge.

Signed:

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SUPERVISOR

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DEDICATION

This scholarly work is dedicated to my sponsors; Peter and Shelagh Norton for having struggled tirelessly in educating me to what I am. I am also deeply indebted to my parents, sisters and brothers for their financial contributions in my study and in producing this work up to its completion.

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to explore the assessment practice in ‘A’ level secondary schools with the major focus on Continuous Assessment Strategies. The study specifically sought to find out the different assessment strategies and their contribution to students’ performance. It was conducted in Masaka district involving 143 students, 39 teachers and 13 Directors of Studies in ‘A’ level secondary schools. The study was guided by the following questions: 1) what continuous assessment strategies were being used in ‘A’ level secondary schools in Masaka District? 2) What is the relationship between the continuous assessment strategies used and students’ performance in ‘A’ level secondary schools in Masaka district? 3) What are the teacher’s perceptions about whether students exposed to various continuous assessment strategies performed better?

This study used qualitative descriptive survey research design to collect and analyze the data. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews and focused group discussions. All these were applied to elicit opinion of all teachers, ‘A’ level students and directors of studies. The information from the questionnaires was presented in figures and percentages in tables while the information obtained from interviews and focused group discussions were analyzed using qualitative techniques. The findings of the study revealed that:

1) Numerous Continuous Assessment Strategies (i.e. the written tests, recap exercises, take-home assignments, check lists, observation, presentations and projects) were being used in ‘A’ level secondary schools.

2) Findings of the study also showed a positive relationship between some of the continuous assessment strategies used and students' performance. Many teachers of "A" level secondary schools in Masaka utilized various continuous assessment strategies to enhance their students' performance. The researcher concluded that continuous assessment strategies positively contribute to the performance of students. It was recommended that regulations and policies should be put in place so that all schools can benefit from the practice and a uniform policy should be emphasized. Also training for teachers should be encouraged especially in the use of continuous assessment strategies.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter highlights the background of the study, problem of the study, purpose of the study, objectives and research questions. The scope of the study and significance of the study are also explained in this chapter.

1.1 Background to the study

This section presents historical, theoretical, conceptual and contextual backgrounds of the study.

1.1.1. Historical Background

According to Kellaghan and Greany (2003), “during the 1980’s and 1990’s, among the many countries that engaged in examination reform were Uganda (1983), Kenya (1985), Zimbabwe (1990), and Tanzania (1994).” Following the World Bank (1988) Policy Paper, ‘Education in Sub-Saharan Africa’, which recommended, “a renewed commitment to academic standards principally through strengthening examination systems” (World Bank 1988: 93), the first plenary meeting of the Donors to African Education (DAE) now called Association for Education Development in Africa (AEDA), reflecting the mood and development in many countries, addressed the need to improve education quality. This led to the establishment of the Working Group on School Examinations (WGSE) in recognition of the important role examinations could play in quality improvement. (Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992).

In Uganda, the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC, 1989) was initiated to review the education system. The commission noted that, the two years of Advanced Level (A' Level) secondary education be retained for the purpose of giving adequate time for preparation to students who wished to continue with higher education. The same commission emphasized the importance of both continuous assessment and final examinations (EPRC 1989:59). The Jomtien declaration (1990) in Thailand about Education for All (EFA) required definitions targets for quality improvement and it specified a need to assess students' achievement (Kellagan, 2003). 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 secondary schools for 'A' Level classes as often as possible and without waiting until the end of each term or year.

1.1.2. Theoretical Background

Ivan Pavlov (1929-1936) in his conditioning theory of Classical Conditioning concluded that a dog learnt to salivate whenever a bell was rung. He undertook many trials and each time the bell was sounded the dog salivated and food was simultaneously presented. The conditioning theory has therefore been adopted to inform this research because it was assumed that students in 'A' Level obtained good grades whenever subject matter/content was taught, followed by many continuous assessment (trials) exercises. Pavlov suggested a Conditioned Response (CR) that refers to student's reactions that develop as result of training/teaching in this study. A Conditioned Stimulus (CS) refers to incentives that evoke CR through training/teaching. In this study, it was assumed that students'

attainment of good grades was the Conditioned Response (CR), continuous assessment was the Conditioned Stimulus (CS), and teaching was the Unconditioned Stimulus (US).

1.1.3. Conceptual Background

Greaney (2001) defines assessment as any procedure or activity that is designed to collect information about the knowledge, attitude, or skills of the learner or group of learners. Assessment is therefore a process through which the quality of an individuals' work or performance is judged. When carried out as an on-going process, assessment is known as Continuous Assessment (CA). CA is a formative evaluation procedure concerned with finding out, in a systematic manner, the over-all gains that a student has made in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills after a given set of learning experience (Ogunnyi, 1984). According to Aggarwal (1999), CA is not simply continuous testing. Continuous assessment does not solely depend on formal tests. CA is more than giving a test, it involves every decision made by the teacher in class to improve students achievement. CA may take different forms such as formal questions given to students during class, take-home assignments/exercises and recapitulation exercises.

Assessment is either internal or external. Internal assessment refers to school-based assessment, which includes class assignments, teacher-made tests, recap exercises, projects, field studies and all these tools form part of the classroom continuous assessment strategies. A continuous assessment strategy refers to the different tools/procedures used in the classroom to understand the academic achievement levels of learners in terms of their knowledge, attitudes and values. Also a strategy in assessment is a purposefully conceived and determined plan of action. It is a pattern of assessment that

seems to attain certain outcomes and to guard against others (Aggarwal, 1999). External assessment refers to tests that are produced by examining bodies away from school. For example, the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) is a public examination offered by the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) that forms part of external assessment at 'A' Level. UNEB is an examination body in Uganda vested with all the authority of examining and certifying learners at 'A' level after they have sat for the final examination at the end of the two years. Students are expected to perform well in both numbers of assessments. In this study, performance is used to denote students' achievement based on their grades or results attained.

1.1.4. Contextual Background

The education system of Uganda is examination oriented and this has persisted since 1960's up to date. All the teaching and learning is centered on passing final examinations. It is sometimes referred to as 'teaching to the test'. This challenge is compounded even further by the fact that students' promotion or selection to another level is based on student's grades. In Masaka District, teachers and students equally do a lot to prepare for the final examination. According to Kellaghan and Greany (2003), that kind of assessment is subjective, informal, immediate, on-going, and intuitive as it interacts with learning as it occurs. For instance, teachers teaching senior six (S.6) 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 students could perform highly in the final examinations. The downside of this approach is that students are encouraged to exercise rote memorization of facts and cramming of information rather than acquiring problem-solving skills. This study was

therefore conceived, designed and undertaken in order to analyze the various classroom assessment practice and find out whether there was any relationship between CA practices with students' performance on the final examinations which is a proxy for students' acquisition of functional skills and knowledge.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The urgent need to promote learning and improve performance in secondary schools in Masaka District resulted into a range of related but different developments in continuous assessment at classroom levels. The resultant feature has been inconsistent performance of students' in 'A' level examinations national wide and performance still varies from school to school. This undermines the future of many students that are in schools that persistently perform poorly. What therefore remains disturbing is whether a relationship between continuous assessment strategies adopted by teachers in "A" level secondary schools of Masaka district with students' performance in final examinations.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish whether a relationship existed between continuous assessment strategies used by teachers with students' performance in A' Level in secondary schools of Masaka district.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the continuous assessment strategies used by teachers in ‘A’ level in Secondary schools of Masaka District.
2. To find out whether there was a relationship between continuous assessments strategies (CAS) used and students’ performance in the final examinations in ‘A’ level in secondary schools of Masaka District.
3. To find out the teachers’ perception of whether students exposed to various continuous assessment strategies perform better in the final examination than their counterparts.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What Continuous Assessment strategies were being used by teachers in secondary schools at ‘A’ level in Masaka District?
2. What was the relationship between the Continuous Assessment strategies being used and students’ performance in ‘A’ level in secondary schools of Masaka District?
3. What were the teachers’ perceptions on whether students exposed to various continuous assessment strategies performed better in the final examination than their counterparts?

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study covered secondary schools in Masaka district; South West of Uganda. The major emphasis was put on teachers and students of A’ Level classes. The study also revolved around continuous assessment strategies being used by the teachers and students’ performance at ‘A’ level secondary schools in Masaka District.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study might contribute in the following ways:

- I. The research results would inform the teacher trainers of the numerous CASs being utilized in “A” level secondary schools of Masaka District that these strategies should be emphasized during the course of teacher training.
- II. The research would provide relevant knowledge and information to the Inspectorate Department about the performance of students in schools that results from the classroom practice.
- III. Teachers would be informed of the alternative CASs that could be used to enhance students’ performance.
- IV. This research will act as a foundation for further research that will benefit researchers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature of this study. It also presents the theoretical review particularly Pavlov's Classical Conditioning Theory. It also highlights the conceptual framework, and related literature on continuous assessment, continuous assessment strategies and students' performance.

2.1 Theoretical Review

The Classical Conditioning Theory by Ivan Pavlov (1929-1936) guided this study. Pavlov performed an experiment on dogs and discovered that dogs learnt to salivate in response to a bell. Many trials had been given in each of which the bell was sounded and food was simultaneously (slightly later) presented. It was thought therefore that students in A' level classes would get good grades whenever the teacher taught and students were exposed to many trials of continuous assessment activities. According to Pavlov, Conditioned Response (CR) was the response developed during training and Conditioned Stimulus (CS) was the stimulus, which included training/teaching activities intended to evoke the CR (i.e. good grades in the final examination). Unconditioned Response (UR) was the same or almost the same response as the CR but it existed prior to training, normally being given whenever a certain stimulus; the Unconditioned Stimulus (US) was presented.

In this study, the Conditioned Response (CR) was the attainment of good grades, which was evoked by the Conditioned Stimulus (CS), which was continuous assessment, and Unconditioned Stimulus was the teaching. To Pavlov, pairing food and the sound of the bell made the dog salivate and in this study, pairing of teaching and continuous assessment activities could make students perform better in terms of good grades in the final examinations. The theory of Pavlov that suggested conditioned stimulus and conditioned response was an important aspect to this study in helping us to understand the relationship between continuous assessment strategies being used (i.e. assignments, teacher-made tests, recap exercises and projects) as the stimuli and academic performance of students.

2.2 Figure 2.1. Shows the Conceptual Framework

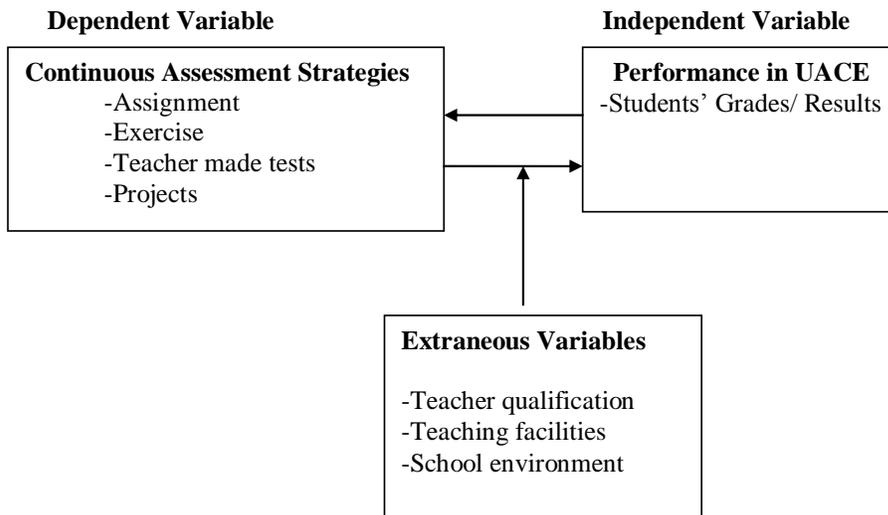


Figure 2.1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. The conceptual framework clearly indicates that continuous assessment strategies being used by the teachers are likely to contribute to students' performance in 'A' level secondary schools. Students attending schools where the teachers were using various continuous assessment strategy tools regularly could perform better. There are also extraneous factors that may influence the relationship between continuous assessment strategies being used and students' performance in 'A' level examinations, such as teacher's qualifications, available teaching facilities, and school environment.

2.3 Review of Related Literature

2.3.1 Continuous Assessment

Webb and Briars (1990) argued that assessment must be an interaction between the teacher and students, with the teacher continually seeking to understand, what a student can do and how a student is able to do it. Yoloye (1991) also pointed out that continuous assessment is only a part of the field of educational evaluation. He further argues that continuous assessment is "a method of evaluating the progress and achievement of students in educational institutions" (Yoloye 1999). This means that continuous assessment could be used to predict future students' performance in the final examinations and the possible success at the work place or on a particular job.

Indeed, in secondary schools, assessment of students' learning in the classroom has been an integral component of the teaching-learning process especially at 'A' level because there is much effort by the teacher to teach a lot of content to students. However, to Kellaghan and Greany (2003), that kind of assessment is subjective, informal, immediate,

on going, 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 just one exam, this is not true in Uganda's 'A' level schools. Teachers and students put their focus on final examinations called Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education Examinations (UACE). This is because UACE results are an important determinant of future opportunities for higher education and other life chances. Since teachers' assessment of students' learning in the classroom plays a central role in the learning process of all students, it merits our serious attention.

According to Obanya (1985), assessment involves the systematic collection of data on all aspects of an educational endeavor. This means that the data collected about students' academic achievement is used on a continuous basis in a systematic way, to take meaningful decisions on what should happen. Graume and Naidoo (2004) have also indicated that, "in a global economy, assessment of students achievement is changing mainly because in an ever-changing knowledge based society, students would not only be required to learn and understand the basics but also to think critically, to analyze, and to make inference for making decisions." It is therefore critical that CAs could utilize strategies that are able to measure the changing students' abilities and attitudes, and this is why this study was undertaken to find out the different continuous assessment strategies teachers used in A'level secondary schools of Masaka District.

2.3.2 The Continuous Assessment Strategies in 'A' level Secondary Schools

According to Onuka (2006:1), 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 (2001) 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 1970's established continuous assessment programs to monitor students' academic progress in the whole education cycle from lower classes to higher classes. Ezeudu (2005) quotes Shinto et al (1989) that in Nigeria continuous assessment was used in geography and out of the 30 geography teachers interviewed, 28 percent of them used oral test, 100 percent used written test while 97 percent used assignments and 100 percent also used examinations as their mode of assessment.

Like Tanzania and Nigeria, continuous assessment is being practiced in many Ugandan secondary 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 (2007:2) 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 secondary schools. Besides testing, assignments and recap exercises, projects are other forms of continuous assessment strategies sometimes used in 'A' level secondary schools.

According to Farrant (1997), continuous assessment is being used increasingly as a strategy to prepare students for terminal examinations. For instance, the results obtained from continuous assessment can be used to identify the students' 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 students 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, 2004:103). This implies that helping students 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 (CA) is used in the promotion process or as an indicator of school quality (Carnoy, 1999). Continuous assessment is also used to provide teachers with feedback about students' 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 students' academic progress and performance. This is what Webb and Brairs (1990) argued that assessment must be an interaction between the teachers and the students, with teachers continually seeking to understand what a student can do and how a student 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 students in 'A' level classes of Masaka District. Yet, Kellaghan, T and Greany, V (2003) further suggested that, there is evidence that the quality of those practices may be

deficient in many ways. This might also be one of the reasons why students' performance in 'A' level secondary schools of Masaka has continued to deteriorate. This study attempted to find out what continuous assessment strategies were being used in "A" level secondary schools of Masaka District. In addition, the study was intended also to examine whether there was any relationship between the continuous assessment strategies being used with students' academic performance in those schools.

2.3.4 Continuous Assessment Strategies and Students Performance

According to Omoifo (2006), what is termed "assessment in many schools today is summative, final, administrative, rigorous and content-driven rather than formative, diagnostic, private, suggestive and goal oriented, as such can be regarded as grading." Summative assessment entails the focus on final examinations by teachers, parents and students. Surprisingly, formative assessment is geared towards the consolidation of students' performance in the final examinations rather than inculcating students with problem solving, critical thinking, and life skills.

American Association for the Advancement of Science (1998) has categorized the purpose of assessment into internal and external purposes. The internal purposes for assessment include conveying to students expectations about what is important to learn, providing information to students and parents about students' progress, helping students to judge their own learning, guiding and improving instruction, classifying and selecting students. The external purpose was to inform the education donors including parents, education departments and ministry about what happened in schools.

Performance is defined in terms of results (Madaus 2000:98). In addition, Kellaghan and Greany (2003:16) noted that, “when continuous assessment has important consequences attached to performance, they are likely to impact directly on teaching and learning and so merit consideration as a mechanism for improving student achievements”. Onuka (2006:11) also found out that in Nigeria there was a comprehensive implementation of continuous assessment and feedback for the improvement of the education system for the accomplishment of learning objectives effectively according to students. This concurred with the finding of Onuka and Oludipe (2005) that there was a significant remediation for poor performance as a result of the application of the feedback mechanism resulting from formative evaluation of learners.

Furthermore, Etienne (2007:2) contended that, the protest against final examinations by students in France in May 1968 was the perfect opportunity for students to point at the unfair and risky final assessment in their schools. They made it clear that such examinations merely represented the performance of the moment and not the efforts made throughout the year. Students insisted on the risk that even the best-prepared student could have a problem on the day of the examination and came out in favor of continuous assessment in order to reduce the risks though some difficulties are likely to occur during implementation of the recap exercises as well.

Graume and Naidoo (2004:) also noted that up to high school level, the assessment of students is done through terminal, half yearly and annual examinations at the schools. Carnoy (1999) contends that, when continuous assessment tools are applied over a period of time, they give an indication whether improvement is taking place or not. Furthermore,

Ogunnyi (1984) noted that CA is cumulative in that any decision made at any time about any student takes cognizance of the previous decision made about him. Continuous assessment also provides the student 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.

However, in secondary schools of Masaka district, it cannot be over-emphasized that the measurement of these domains, using continuous assessment, makes it a good tool for improving learning objectives and outcomes. This is so because in his research, Kallegghan and Greany (2003) noted a deficiency in the practice of continuous assessment in Africa where Uganda is part. This therefore may account for the variance in performance among schools and students in particular in 'A' level secondary schools of Masaka. Since there is a need to improve students' performance in our education system as a whole, the need exists to establish what CASs are being used by teachers in secondary schools. The need also exists to investigate whether there is any relationship between continuous assessment strategies being used in secondary schools and students' performance in the final examination. Finally, the need exists to find out the teachers' perceptions on whether students exposed to numerous CA strategies perform better than their counterparts.

The chapter has presented the relevant literature particularly on continuous assessment strategies and students' performance. The next chapter discusses the methodology utilized in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design, sample selection procedures, how validity and reliability was maintained. This chapter also highlights the procedures used for carrying out the field study and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study used a descriptive survey research design utilizing both qualitative research methods and quantitative approaches. This research design was seen to be the most desirable because the study sought to describe the current situation in 'A' level classrooms in terms of continuous assessment strategies being used and their relationship to students' academic performance. Surveys are well-known instruments that can be used to gather a lot of information in a short period of time. Given the time constraints and the financial resources available, the researchers decided to use the survey research design. Qualitative research methods in this study were also appropriate in order to explain how the teachers in schools conducted CA strategies. Straus (1998) noted that '...research projects where members are open to helpful criticism, can enjoy the play of ideas, and can appreciate the give and take that occurs in group discussions'.

The data was guided by the following questions:

- 1) What were the continuous assessment strategies being used in 'A' level secondary schools of Masaka District?
- 2) What was the relationship between Continuous Assessment strategies being used and students' academic performance on final examinations in 'A' level in secondary schools of Masaka District?
- 3) What were the teacher's perceptions about whether students exposed to various continuous assessment strategies performed better than their peers?

3.2. Sample Selection

The study targeted 'A' level classroom teachers and students in secondary schools of Masaka District. Teachers were selected because they taught and executed testing and examination of students. Students were also selected because they were the beneficiaries of continuous assessment strategies being used by the teachers in their schools and it was also the students that sat for the final examinations.

3.2.1 Selection of Schools

Fifteen 'A' level secondary schools in Masaka district were randomly selected. Among these schools, nine were privately owned schools and six were government-aided schools. The reason for the 9:6 ratio of private to government school is that in Masaka District, majority of secondary schools are private owned. It is therefore reasonable that during the random sampling, private owned secondary schools outnumbered the government-aided schools. However, all these schools in the sample had comparable

teaching facilities, teaching staff and school environment. Furthermore, the simple random sampling method was also used to select the school participants.

3.2.2 Population Selection

In each of the participating schools, 3 teachers were randomly selected to participate in the study, 10 “A” level students and one Director of Studies (DOS) were also randomly selected each school that participated in the study. Therefore, a total population of 45 teachers, 145 students and 15 DOSs were selected to participate in the study. The reason for this small sample was due to the limited resources and time constraints that the researcher experienced. A smaller manageable sample offered the researcher the ideal information needed and at the same time enabled him to complete this research project in a timely manner.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Three instruments were used in the study, namely: questionnaires, structured interviews, and Focused Group Discussion (FGD).

Questionnaires

Two sets of questionnaires were used. One set of questionnaires was administered to teachers and the second one was administered to students. Although 150 questionnaires had been distributed to students, only 143 were returned. Out of the 45 questionnaires distributed to teachers, only 39 were returned. This made it possible to collect adequate information and opinions from the respondents within a short period of time.

Interviews

Face to face interviews were given to the Directors of Studies in 15 participating secondary schools. The interviews were used because of their advantages over questionnaires especially to allow the researchers to probe for particular responses, clarifications and confirmations of information from the respondents.

Focused Group Discussion (FGD)

Different groups of teachers were met at their respective schools for discussions. They were asked questions designed to draw their attention and response on topics related to this study. Respondents were allowed to answer in their own words rather than having to choose from predetermined options, as it is usually the case for survey techniques. Although it was intended that all the 45 teachers participate in the FGD, only 34 teachers did actually participate in the FGD and the rest of teachers were not available for the discussion. The information from the groups helped to supplement data that was collected using interviews and questionnaires, which enhanced the possibilities for triangulation.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

In order to ascertain the validity of instruments, expert opinion was sought from the supervisor, lecturers, and peers on face, content and format of the questionnaires, interviews and group organization. Consultations with the supervisors, other lecturers, and peers helped to identify errors and offered the opportunity to modify and improve the instruments. Also to ascertain the validity and reliability of the research instrument, a pilot study was done in two schools within the same district that did not participate in the actual study. Following the pilot study, more errors were identified in the instruments. Drawing on the expert opinions from the supervisors, lecturers, head teachers, and peers,

appropriate corrections were made on the instruments. Thereafter, all instruments were administered by the researcher and collected immediately.

3.5 Data Analysis

All the information from the questionnaires was entered into Microsoft excel spreadsheets. The Microsoft excel program was used to generate descriptive statistics, graphics, tables and charts. The interpretation of the descriptive statistics made it possible to make appropriate inferences in terms of determining the influence of continuous assessment strategies to students' performance. The qualitative data was analyzed into themes and concepts. Based on the grounded theory plausible relationships among themes and concepts were identified (Strauss & Carbin, 1998). The Grounded Theory was very ideal for this study as it involves inductive data analysis, which according to Ary et al (2002) type of data, analysis could lead to formation of a new theory.

3.6 Limitation of the Study

Different limitations hindered the progress of this research, for instance; some respondents declined from participating in the study information while others continued to postpone the interview and focus group discussions. This slowed down the process of data collection.

In summary, this chapter has presented the methodology utilized in this study. The next chapter will provide the data presentation and analysis of the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, findings of this study are presented based on the research questions. These findings are based on 39 questionnaires from the teachers, 143 questionnaires from the students and 13 questionnaires filled by Directors of Studies.

Teachers Background

Table 4:1. Teachers' Background information

		Count	Percent
Gender	Male	29	74%
	Female	10	26%
Highest Qualification	Diploma	19	49%
	Degree	20	51%
Time spent in school	0 – 2	15	41%
	3 – 5	17	46%
	Over 6 years	5	13%

The table 4.1 indicates that the largest percentages of teachers (74 %) were male teachers compared to 26% who were female teachers. Whether this imbalance between male and female teachers has a significant influence on students' performance, it is yet to be known. Given that usually female teachers serve as role models to students than male

teachers, this might have an implication on students' performance. The findings showed that the teachers who are degree holders dominated the teaching force of 'A' level secondary schools especially in urban areas while in rural areas, most of the teachers were diploma holders. Thus, "A" level secondary schools in the rural areas are disadvantaged because most of their teachers being diploma holders are not qualified to teach at that level. The discussions with head teachers of rural schools revealed that the availability of diploma holders in 'A' level schools was due to the failure of school proprietors to raise enough salary for degree holders. Many teachers were relatively new in their workstations and most of them had spent 3-5 years in their schools, which was a short period. This implied that most teachers were inexperienced and less likely to carry out effective assessment of students.

Students' Background

Table 4:2. Students' Background Information

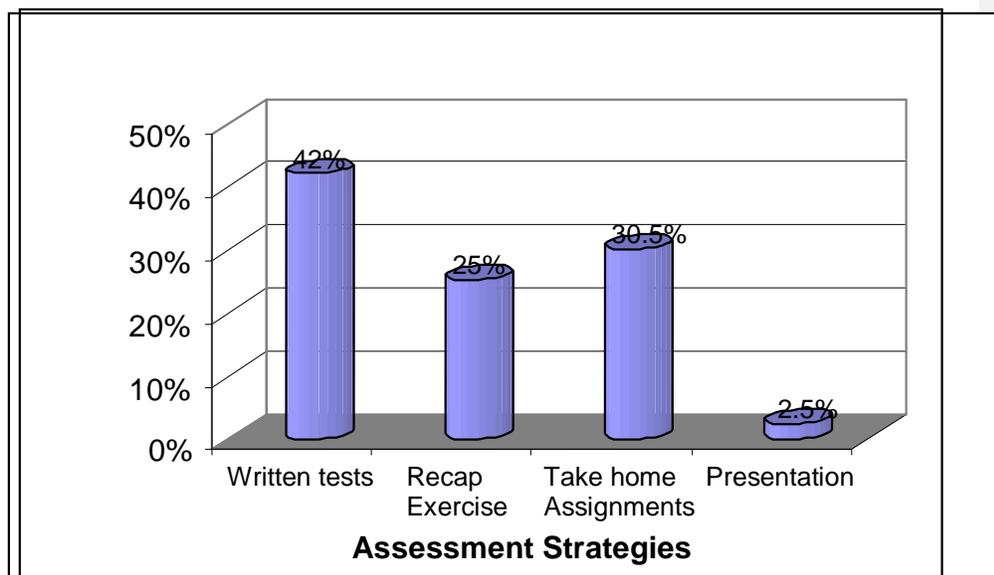
	Items	Count	Percent
Gender	Male	46	32%
	Female	97	68%
Current class	S 5	49	34%
	S 6	94	66%

Table 4.2 shows that female students dominated the students' sample population because girls were outnumbering boys in classroom enrollment. This is quite unusual especially at "A" level for girls' enrollments to surpass that of boys. Senior six students were 66% compared to 34% of class five. This was because at the time of the administration of the questionnaires, there were more senior six students that had reported than senior five students.

4.1. **Research Question One:** The continuous assessment strategies used in
Secondary Schools at 'A' Level in Masaka District

In response to research question one, teachers as well as students of "A" level were probed and their responses are presented in figures 4.1 and 4.2 respectively.

Figure 4:1 Teachers' Response on How They Assessed Students.



The finding in Fig 4.1 indicates that written tests were the most commonly used continuous assessment strategy by 'A' level teachers in Masaka District followed by take-home assignment and recap exercise. Presentation strategy was the less utilized strategy by the teachers.

Figure 4:2 Students' Response on How Teachers Assessed their Work Daily

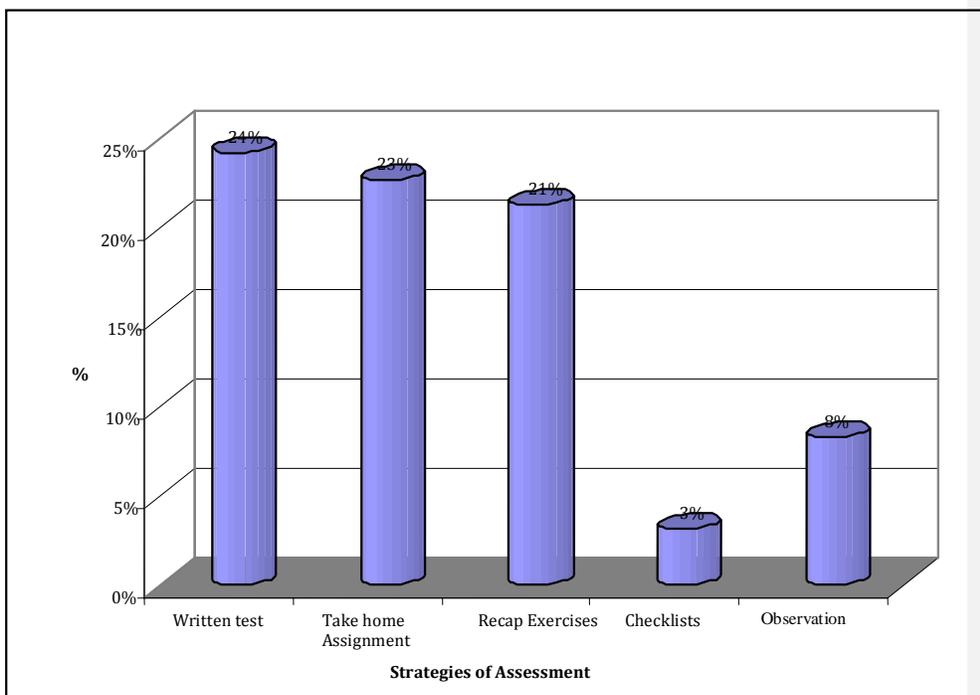


Figure 4.2 indicates that 'A' level students concurred with their teachers' response in figure 4.1 of the teachers' response about the same thing.

The table shows that written tests, take-home assignments and recap exercises dominated the teachers' continuous assessment strategies. Checklist was the less used strategy. The researcher found out that teachers had gained very little training in the use of checklists. This was more evidence by the failure of any teachers to present any form of checklist to the researcher.

4.2.2 Frequency of the Use of Continuous Assessment Strategies

Findings regarding the frequency in use of continuous assessment strategies as gathered from teachers and students are presented in table 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6 respectively.

Table 4:3. Shows the Teachers' Responses on the Number of Times Different CA Strategies Were Used

Items	Very often	Often	Not Often	Never	Total Response	Total Sample
Oral tests	0	0	0	0	0	39
Written Tests	16	17	4	0	37	39
Take-home	9	18	10	0	37	39
Projection	2	6	10	12	30	39
Recap exerc.	11	19	4	0	34	39
Checklist	2	6	6	6	20	39
Observation	6	10	2	4	22	39
Questionnaire	2	4	0	10	16	39

Zero (0) means no response.

Table 4.3 indicates that written tests were the most frequently used CA strategy i.e.(with 33 respondents out of 37), followed by Recap with 30 out of 34 respondents. This study revealed that teachers did not use oral tests.

Table 4:4. Shows the Teachers' Response on When They Used the Different CA Strategies

Items	Daily	Weekly	Fortnight	Monthly	Half-term	Termly	Total Reponses	Total Sample
Oral tests	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39
Written tests	0	19	1	14	4	1	39	39
Take-home assignment	3	20	4	2	0	0	29	39
Projects	2	0	0	3	2	0	7	39
Recap Exercises	14	13	1	0	0	0	28	39
Checklists	0	2	2	0	2	0	6	39
Observation	2	4	2	0	0	0	8	39

Findings in Table 4.4 indicates that 19 out of 39 respondents used written tests on a weekly basis throughout the term, 20 of the 29 respondents used take-home assignment

also on a weekly basis and while recap exercises were given on a daily basis. Table 4.4 also shows that a few teachers used projects, checklists and observations.

Table 4.5: Students' Responses on the Number of Times their Teachers Used Different CA Strategies

Items	Very Often	Often	Not often	Never	Total Responses	Total Sample
Oral tests	0	0	0	0	0	143
Written tests	63	68	12	0	143	143
Take-home assignments	60	65	14	4	143	143
Projects	0	0	0	0	0	143
Recap Exercises	94	33	16	0	143	143
Checklists	0	13	14	47	74	143
Observation	18	33	31	17	99	143
Questionnaire	0	0	0	0	0	143

The findings in table 4.5 illustrate that students were frequently given Recap Exercises while written tests and take-home assignment were less frequent. Checklists and observation were rarely used. Oral tests and questionnaires were never used according to students. This is in agreement with the responses given by their teachers.

The responses to when the teachers carried out the different continuous assessment strategies to assess students' work are summarized in table 4.6.

Table 4:6 Students' Responses on When Their Teachers Used Different CA

Strategies

Items	Daily	Weekly	Fortnight	Monthly	Half-Termly	Termly	Total
Oral Tests	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Written-tests	10	63	9	47	10	4	143
Take-home assignments	79	36	12	8	8	0	143
Projects	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recap-Exercises	92	32	9	5	5	0	143
Checklists	10	11	11	0	17	21	70
Observation	27	12	14	15	18	25	111

In Table 4.6 student's responses concurred with those of their teachers mainly in the use of written tests, take-home assignments and recap exercises. The three strategies were more used than the rest of the assessment strategies. Furthermore, oral tests were not used by teachers according to students and in fact none of them responded about oral tests.

4.2 Research Question Two: The relationship between CA strategies and students' performance in 'A' Level in secondary schools in Masaka District.

The findings of the teachers and students' responses about this question are presented in Table 4.7 and 4.8 respectively.

Table 4:7. Teachers' Responses on the Relation of CA to Students' Performance

Contributions	SA	A	D	SD	Total response	Total Sample
Build the whole mind of the student	18	21	0	0	39	39
Improves teaching-learning process	26	13	0	0	39	39
Help Identify weak students	24	13	0	0	37	39
Students develop a revising habit	18	19	0	0	37	39
Help students master the contents	23	16	0	0	39	39
Students perform better in final examination	18	17	2	0	37	39
Arouses students' desire for attention in class	14	19	6	0	39	39
The more the CA, the more confident and ready students become for final exam.	20	19	0	0	39	39
Closes the gap between the students and teachers.	24	9	6	0	39	39

Zero (0) means no response.

From the table 4.7, out of 39 Teachers that participated in this study, 26 strongly agreed that CA improved the teaching-learning process, 24 teachers strongly agreed that CA helped to identify weak students and that students easily mastered the subject content. A large number of teachers also strongly agreed that, the more CA strategies used and exposed to students, the more confident and ready the the students became for the final exam.

Table 4.8: Students' Responses on the Relationship of CA Strategies to Their Performance

Contributions	SA	A	D	SA	Total Response	Total Sample
Help me to revise	18	21	0	0	39	39
I become more confident and ready for final exams	26	13	0	0	39	39
Teacher gives me quick feedback	24	13	0	0	37	39
Improves my understanding	18	19	0	0	37	39
I learn answering techniques and question approach	23	16	0	0	39	39
Helps to master the notes	18	17	2	0	37	39
Arouses my desire to attention and concentrate in class	14	19	6	0	39	39
Helps me to interact with the teacher.	20	19	0	0	39	39

Zero (0) means no response.

From table 4:8, it was clearly observed that majority of the students felt that CAs contributed to their good performance. CA helped them to revise more effectively and to also gain confidence and become ready for the final examinations. Many students also indicated that when their teachers gave them quick feedback, they were able to identify their weaknesses and therefore they made efforts to improve. It was very clear from the findings that CA strategies arouse students desire to pay attention and concentrate because they were expecting to be assessed most of the time.

The following findings were discovered on how different CA strategies related to students performance.

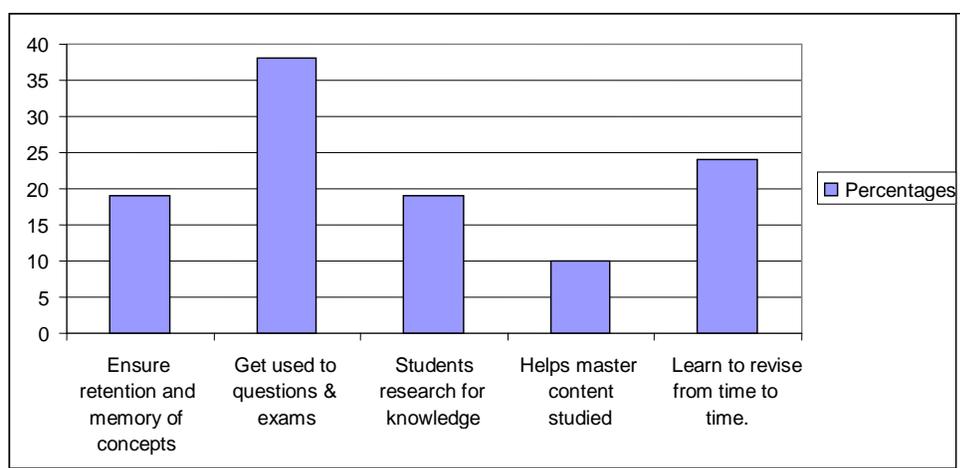
Further analysis of the relationship between continuous assessments strategies (take-home assignment, recap exercises, written tests, and projects) and students performance in “A” level schools is presented in figures 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6 respectively.

Comment [s1]: Is this necessary or there is a table missing?

A) Take-Home Assignments

Teachers were asked about the contributions of take-home assignment, recap exercises and written tests as strategies of continuous assessment to students' performance in 'A' level. The responses are summarized in the figures, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 respectively.

Figure 4:3 Teachers' Response on How Take-home Assignments Related to Students' Performance

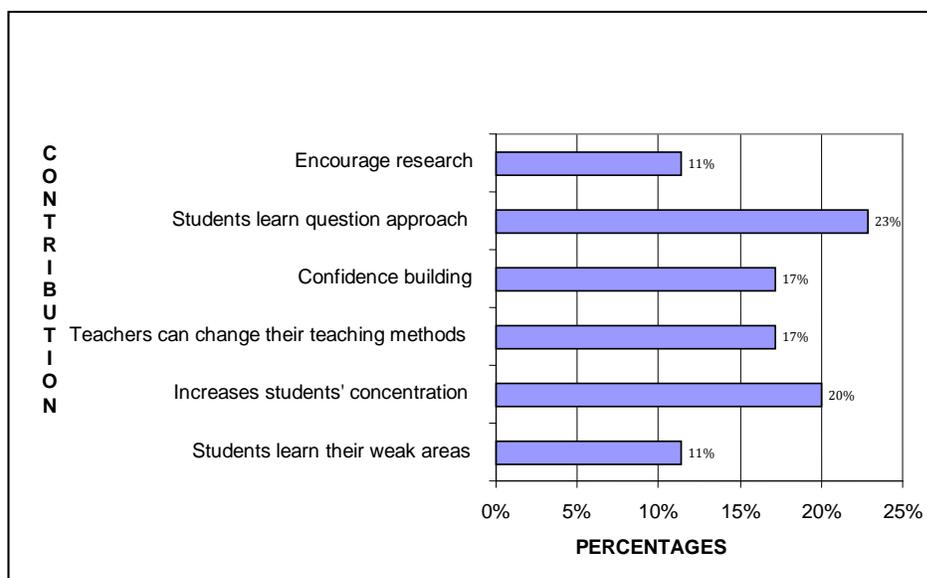


In the figure 4:3 teachers responded that a Take-home assignment was the best strategy for helping students to learn than the question-answer approach. This take-home assignments assisted them to develop a good revising habit. Teachers indicated that assignments enabled students to get exposed to a variety of questions more often and when given prompt feedback from teachers, students were able to learn the best ways of approaching questions and presenting their answers. Therefore, CA positively relate to students' performance. Take-home assignment was found out not to help much with students the mastering content they are taught. The reasons are discussed in chapter five.

B) Recap Exercises

Figure 4.5: Teachers Response on How Recap Exercises Related to Students’

Performance



The findings in Table 4.5 indicate that the largest number of teachers responded that students learnt question approach through Take-home assignments. Majority of students felt that the recap exercises were useful in increasing their concentration and attention in class as well as building their confidence.

C) Written Tests

Figure 4:6 Teachers' Responses on How Written Tests Are Related to Students' Performance

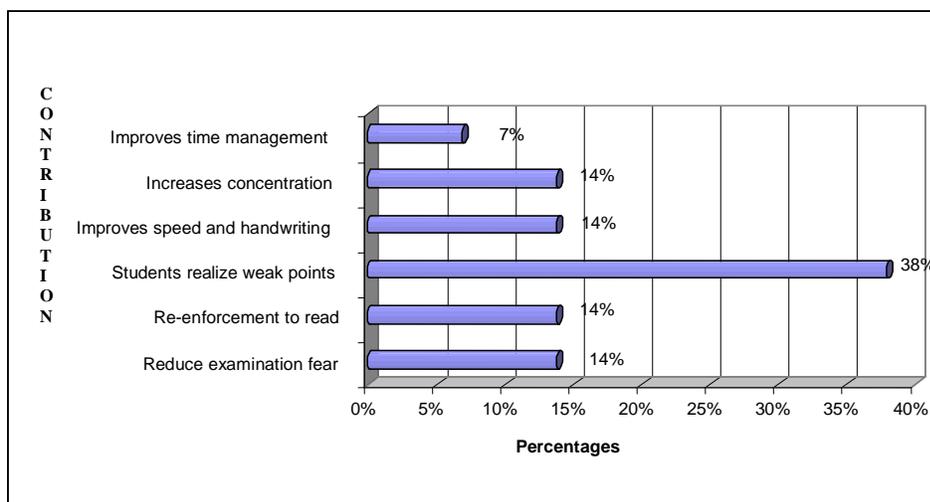
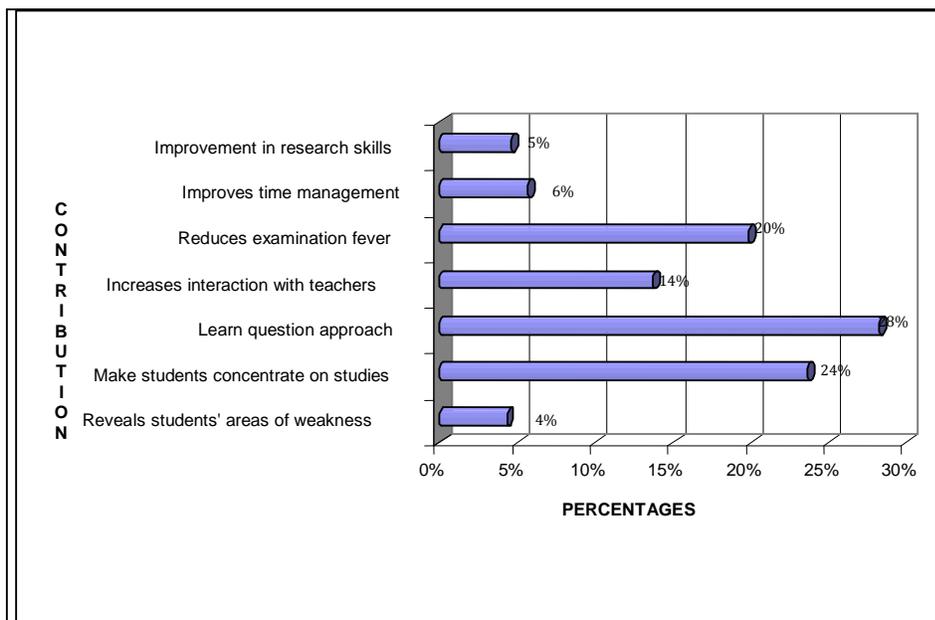


Figure 4:6 shows the teachers' perceptions about the relationship of written tests to students' performance. It was revealed that through written tests students were informed of their main weak areas, which helped them to devise ways of improving on their performance. Written tests contained questions selected from various topics already learnt after a given period of time. Therefore when students 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. Written tests are neither shown to be reducing the fear of students for final examinations nor reinforcing students to read more.

Figure 4.7: Students' Response on How Continuous Assessment Strategies Related to their performance



From the Figure 4.7, Students' responses concurred with those of their teachers that CA strategies equipped them with the skill and knowledge of question approach and answer techniques. Students also responded that, the practice of CA made them concentrate on their studies. This was because they were expectant of a test, an assignment or a Recap Exercise. Students therefore devoted most of their time on revising their books. Students also agreed that CA reduced the examination fears and increased their interaction with the teachers. The data analyzed in this chapter finally revealed that there were different CA strategies being used in schools that included; written tests, recap exercises, take-home assignments, presentations, observations, and checklists. Teachers and their students all agreed that CA strategies contributed to students' performance.

This chapter has the findings of the study discussed in Chapter Five. Furthermore the conclusions and recommendations are also provided in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

This study was conducted to find out from teachers' and students' perceptions on whether CA strategies were related to students' performance in 'A' level secondary schools of Masaka district. In this chapter, the results obtained are discussed systematically, question by question. Thereafter, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research are given.

5.1. Continuous assessment strategies used in Secondary Schools at 'A' Level in Masaka District.

The study revealed that a variety of CA strategies were being used in Masaka 'A' level secondary schools. Written tests (i.e. teacher made tests) were the most commonly used. This coincides with what Yolooye (1991), Carnoy (1999), Gaume and Naidoo (2004:101), Omoifo (2006) noted that teacher-made tests are the widely used in schools and in classroom. It was also revealed that the written tests used at 'A' level included matching items, lists, labels in biology, physics, chemistry and English literature. Arranged items and multiple-choice questions were also used in geography, chemistry, agriculture, biology, music and language studies. In addition, tests also consisted of short answer questions particularly in science subjects and economics. Essay type questions were mainly used in history, religious studies (i.e. Divinity and Islam), geography, and economics.

This study through teachers' discussions also revealed that teachers used questions at the end of every chapter in the textbooks to enrich their written tests. Teachers in a focused group discussion explained why written tests were dominating their continuous assessment practice. They revealed that:

Teacher 1: "I can set many questions in one test picked from many topics"

Teacher 2: "A lot more subject content can be examined in a single test than in a classroom Exercise and many times students respect tests especially the examinations"

Teacher 3: "...because a lot of subject content can be asked in a single test, I can know what my students did or did not understand from a wide range"

These teachers' responses coincided with those of Directors of Studies. They all looked at tests as being relevant in assessing students and that they contributed to their overall academic performance. This implies that as far as teachers are concerned, CA carried out by a carefully planned testing provided them with the feedback on their own teaching and the learning of their students. This means that every aspect of performance of a student in 'A' level on a CA strategy is challenging to the teacher to seek ways of improving the performance of their students. When teachers were asked how often tests were administered, most of the teachers responded that tests were administered on a weekly basis. This meant that teachers attached a lot of meaning/value to tests.

Findings from a focused group discussion and interviews held with teachers and Directors of Studies indicated that CAs through tests were cumbersome and time consuming because enormous amounts of time went into setting questions and marking students' scripts and doing corrections. In some schools, where classes were larger, it made it difficult to implement CA. Directors of Studies complained that there was a

problem of part-time teaching on the side of the teachers that also hindered the implementation of tests. Though teachers only thought that tests were teacher-made and only designed for individual students or schools, they forget that tests could be administered in groups. Students could even test themselves if well oriented and this could solve many of the problems involved in administering tests.

When directors of studies (D.O.S) were asked why they encouraged the use of take-home assignments as a strategy of continuous assessment to students, they responded that:

D.O.S 1: "...students can consult more texts in the library or elsewhere to supplement on what the teachers give them."

D.O.S 2: "students learn to answer questions using their own words, ideas while improving their reasoning"

The researcher realized that teachers and DOS wanted their students to be given opportunity to demonstrate their ability to organize ideas, views, and points and to express themselves freely after doing some research.

However this has many limitations. it was difficult to make objective and reliable judgment of an essay from a take-home assignment where students often present different ideas expressed in different ways. Essay questions also took excessively long time for a teacher to grade. The researcher noted that, a student with a good hand writing and language skills passed with distinctions while those who have internalized details of the subject but did not have the language skills to explain their views were permanently disadvantaged. As an alternative, the researcher would suggest short answer items as they allow a wide range of test techniques and possibilities, provided more thorough coverage of the syllabus, they give opportunities for details, they allow for accurate and precise

feedback and discourage students from concentrating their efforts on selected areas which are thought to be examinable.

In Figure 4.1, teachers responded that presentation was another CA strategy used to assess students at 'A' level. According to teachers, the presentations were carried out either in a group or as individual students. What was identified in this study was that, teachers gave a question, theme, item or a topic to students so that they could research about it and present their findings in class. Two scenarios appeared; first, in the Arts subjects of history, geography, religious studies and economics, it was found out that teachers gave different questions to either groups or to individual students and students were supposed to organize their notes, arguments to present to the whole class. In scenario two, in subjects like music, languages, biology, agriculture and chemistry, the teachers were giving topics, themes or schemes for students either to role-play or demonstrate in groups or as individuals in class.

In commenting about assessing work in the arts, Ross et al (1993) contended that talk was the most natural and the most productive way of evaluating pupils' creative process and their critical appreciation of their own achievement. Teachers revealed in an interview that, presentations helped them identify many other aspects of students' performance, which receives little attention such as interpersonal skills, disposition skills, reaction to criticisms and good oratory skills. However, respondents lamented that they usually found some difficulties mainly when a dialogue after presentation is begun. For instance, the teachers were required to allow a student ample time to think about a question before responding and must listen sensitively in order to understand a student' thinking which might need to be followed.

The study discovered that observation and checklists were other continuous assessment strategies used by 'A' level teachers. According to students, teachers awarded them marks by observing what they were doing through demonstrations, role-plays, presentations, recitations and modeling. These were commonly used in laboratories, music, agriculture, languages, technical drawing and fine art. For students, the results from these observations helped them to change their way of acting and presenting information which always improved their performance. However the efforts of the researchers to get any example of the checklist from the teachers and director of studies were in vain. Therefore the researchers wondered whether the students differentiated the marking guide from the checklist.

Also to note, the other continuous assessment strategies that were used by the teacher were questionnaires and projects. The results indicated that, the two strategies are rarely used and most teachers had never used project and questionnaire to assess students in 'A' level. The findings from the interview with directors of studies and teachers revealed that, there was limited time for the two strategies. They stated that:

Teacher 1: "if I use projects, will I ever complete the syllabus? I do not even have time to set questionnaires."

Teacher 2: "it's difficult to monitor projects due to limited time available during the term. Even the DOS does not recommend it because it wastes a lot of students' time". The responses showed that, teachers are always teaching to complete the syllabus and anything beyond that is useless to them. This meant that, the limited time available in schools does not allow the diversity of CA strategies available for use. Therefore teachers

opted for strategies that would work within the limited time frame. The downside of this is that little exploration and creativity of students in other areas is experienced. To the researcher, if teachers carried out the projects in a well-planned manner, the same projects would yield good results. Projects require enough time for planning and implementation, which requires teachers' dedication. To manage the efficiency within the implementation of projects as a continuous assessment strategy, teachers can use group course works for students, the teacher can give enough time for the project. This helps to minimize the problems associated with time and classroom numbers.

Continuous assessment requires the use of a diverse set of data for a purpose. That purpose is the modification of the learning work to adapt to the need that is revealed by the feedback from the student. The reaction of teachers to students' feedback range from the immediate classroom objectives, lesson plan and the teaching, through to a comprehensive review of a variety of appropriate continuous assessment strategy in order to appraise progress over a whole topic or theme covered.

5.2 The relationship between Continuous Assessment strategies being used and students' performance in 'A' level in secondary schools of Masaka District.

The findings obtained through the use of questionnaires, interviews and focused group discussions with students, teachers and DOS revealed a lot of important insights. The most salient insights and discussions are presented below.

The following questions were asked:

Teachers strongly agreed that CA strategies improved the teaching and the learning processes. The argument was that through frequent use of CAs teachers realized the best ways of delivering their subject content so that students could easily learn and understand it. Teachers also argued that CA helped them to assess their own performance and effectiveness of their teaching. This is supported by the findings of Onuka (2005) about CA that; if consistently applied in the schools system, it would result into an enhanced performance of students and of course of the teachers, as both of these groups would strive to perform better. This is because the teacher would discover his own areas of weakness and strive to ameliorate them. This is in line with what Black et al (2000) noted that, all collection of formative evidence must be guided by a strategy for ensuring action. The distinctive features of CA in 'A' level secondary schools of Masaka were that, the information was used to modify learning program in order to make it more effective.

Most of the teachers indicated that CA strategies strongly helped them to identify weak students. Teachers contended that written tests were the best strategy in revealing the students weakest points. According to Yoloye (1991), scores from CA help the teacher to identify the students' difficulties and help them thereby to master those things they are yet to master. When interviewed, one of the Director of Studies argued that, through the frequent use of CAs, teachers were informed of how students were progressing and the teachers would give more time to the weaker students to assist them improve.

Similar findings have been revealed by other studies, for instance, the National Assessment of Progress in Education (2003) in Uganda found out that monthly testing had the greatest positive effect on pupils' achievement. This NAPE study also revealed that perhaps it allows time to plan, test, mark and use feedback to redirect teaching and

also for pupils to internalize what they have learnt (NAPE, 2003:165). Kelleghan et al (2003:47) found out that in Africa homework provided the opportunities for teachers to assess students' proficiency as well as to provide feedback on problems students may exhibit. Greany (2003) noted that its role is to determine students' current level of knowledge, skills or understanding, to diagnose problems they may be encountering and to make decisions about the next instruction steps to take.

According to this study, the findings implied that CA at 'A' level provided a framework in which classroom objectives were set and students' progress chartered and expressed. It yielded a basis for planning the next topic or sub-topic in response to student needs. When questions were asked, whether take-home assignments, recap exercises, and written tests facilitated development of high order thinking, the research found out that 81.8 percent of students agreed that they learnt answering techniques and question approaches through CA. Students explained that when words like explain, identify, describe, state, compare and contrast, to what extent, were used in continuous assessment strategies, they got familiar with their interpretation. They argued that they learnt how to approach a question with such terms, how to organize their answers which helped them to perform better when they sat for an exam.

The DOS commented that, these CAs encouraged teachers to always to use terms that were also commonly used by the examiners in the final examinations. To them, this gave enough practice to students as they got exposed to such questions that enabled them to give a good presentation during the final exam. When interviewed, the DOS revealed that, oral presentation and group work helped students to develop communication and

interpersonal skills and they allowed in achieving course expectation. The DOS stated that:

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“Because the students are afraid of being looked at (observed) and graded as weak students by the teachers and fellow students, students will make an equal and worthwhile contribution in the planning, researching and presenting of the subject”.

This statement shows that students involved themselves in self-work, personal research and innovation so that they could meet the required standards in the class. This improved their retention capacity and ability making continuous assessment to have an impact on their performance.

While commenting about observation, Cavendish et al (1990) noted that some teachers found it surprisingly useful if they suspended their active teaching interventional for a time making clear to a class what they were doing and why to concentrate only on looking and listening. In this study however, the research found out through a focused discussion with students that some teachers behave differently towards boys and girls and towards pupils from the different social classes. In each of these cases, students complained that some teachers would rate a particular piece of work more highly if it came from one type of student rather than the other. The researcher suggests use of checklists whenever observation is done. Checklists can be used to record the presence or absence of knowledge, particular skills, learning process, or attitudes. They may be used to record such information in relation to written assignments, presentations, classroom performances, and test-taking behaviors.

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5.3 Teachers' perception on whether students exposed to numerous continuous assessment strategies perform better than their peers.

According to teachers, the Focused Group Discussions as a kind of continuous assessment, is a good practice especially for improving the performance of students and in monitoring their progress. Teachers contended that every aspect of performance of a student in 'A' level on a CA strategy is challenging to the teacher to seek ways of improving it. Teachers also commented that, continuous assessment is not a physical thing, but rather the interaction they also have with their students, material and knowledge while in classroom. To the researcher, this meant that continuous assessment is what actually happens in the classroom and what teachers and students do to measure how much learning is taking place.

It was found out that in continuous assessment, learners are not objects to be acted upon/assessed. They have a clear voice in the way that the continuous assessment sessions evolve. The teachers' perception here was more on interactions. This means that attention shifts from teaching to learning and assessment to learning itself. The idea of a teacher having a pre-specified assessment plan or program tends to direct attention to teaching. Teachers have to put learners first in continuous assessment which is also termed as student-centered approach. However, when we come to think about this way of approaching continuous assessment in practice, a number of possible challenges do arise. The first is a problem for those teachers and educators who want some greater degree of uniformity in what is taught and assessed. Secondly, because we are considering a learner-centered assessment approach, this can lead to variations in continuous assessment strategies being employed in classrooms. A teacher might need to try out and

evaluate each continuous assessment strategy on individual students due to the uniqueness each student possesses.

All in all, this study found out that, if properly, professionally and honestly carried out, CA strategies have a great positive potential relationship with the students' performance.

5.2 Conclusion

Drawing on teachers' and students' perceptions, there were very many continuous assessment strategies used and these were found to have a positive relationship to students' performance in the final examinations. This is because through CA, teachers tend to realize their own weaknesses in teaching and those of their students and strive to ameliorate them. Good application of CA using different strategies would help in moving towards accomplishing learning objectives and restoring greater confidence in the class and school systems. Enhanced performance of students would culminate in the reduction of the incidences of examination malpractices, as students would have been well prepared for the certificates examinations through CA. However, the contribution should not only be looked at as improving student performance but also as determining students' current level of knowledge, skills, or understanding of content.

5.3 Recommendations

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

2. Higher institutions of learning should train teachers on how to use CA strategies for their implementation in secondary schools. It was found out through the interviews and focused group discussions that teachers complained of the many problems they found as they attempted to implement Continuous Assessments. Therefore the training should focus on how teachers can carry out continuous assessment in the different teaching and learning stations with ease.
3. Given the complexity of classroom assessment and evidence relating to teachers' skills and practice in this area, there is an obvious need for development of an infrastructure to support 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.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

1. There is a need for this research to be carried out in other districts so as to compare and test how general the research findings of this study can be made.
2. There is a need to research about how the teachers carry out CA strategies in various school settings. This will also give a detailed picture of the adaptation of a strategy to various situations.
3. The role of the students, administrators and parents in CA need to be researched about. There should be some research to equip us with this information.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 'A' LEVEL TEACHERS

Dear Participant,

Please kindly respond to the questions and statements as frankly and truthfully as you can. Your cooperation and contribution towards this research will be very much appreciated. All information given will strictly be kept confidential. (Do not write your name)

SECTION A; Introduction

1) What is your sex? Male Female

1) What is your highest qualification?.....

2) How long have you been a teacher in 'A' level?

i) 0-2 Years

ii) 3-5 Years

ii) 5-8 Years

iv) Over 8 Years

3) What subjects do you teach?

SECTION B; Continuous Assessment Strategies at 'A' level

4) How do you consistently assess your students in class?

a).....

b).....

c).....

d).....

e).....

f).....

5) What is the **most** used strategy of continuous assessment in your classroom? (*Tick the box which applies*)

- i) Tests ii) Assignments
 ii) Projects iv) Other Specify.....

6) How often do you carry out the following as assessment? (*Tick (✓) the most Appropriate*)

Strategies	Very Often	Often	Not Often	Never
Oral Tests				
Written Tests				
Take-home Assignments				
Projects				
Recap Exercises				
Checklists				
Observation				
Questionnaires				

7) When do you carry out the following strategies? (*Tick the most Appropriate*)

Period	Oral Tests	Written Tests	Assignments (take-home)	Projects	Recap Exercises	Checklists	Observation
Daily							
Weekly							
Fortnight							
Monthly							
Half-term							
Termly							

SECTION C

Continuous Assessment Strategies and Students' Performance at 'A' level

8) How does daily assessment relate to students' performance in final examinations?

(Answer by putting a tick in the most appropriate box)

CA - Continuous Assessment

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. CA builds the whole mind of a student as they prepare for final examinations				
2. CA improves teaching and learning process leading to improved performance.				
3. CA helps to identify the weak students and amelioration can be done.				
4. The students learn to revise from time to time which increases retention and memorization.				
5. CA enables students to master the content as given by teachers.				
6. Students who perform well in CA also perform better in final examinations.				
7. CA assessment arouses students' desire for attention and concentration while in class.				
8. The more the students go through CA, the more confident and ready they become for the final exams.				
9. The gap between the teacher and students is closed as the teacher gets to know the students so well.				

9) In your opinion, how do the following continuous assessment strategies contribute to students' performance in final examinations?

a) Take-home Assignments.....

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b) Class room Recap Exercises.

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c) Written Tests.

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d) Classroom Oral Tests.....

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e) Projects.....

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f) Classroom Checklists

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Thank You

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 'A' LEVEL STUDENTS

Dear Student,

Please kindly respond to the questions and statements as frankly and truthfully as you can. Your cooperation and contribution towards this research will be very much appreciated. All information given will strictly be kept confidential. (Do not write your name)

SECTION A; Introduction

- 1) What is your sex? Male Female
- 1) What is your current class?
- 2) What is your subject combination?
- 3) How many years have you spent in 'A' level?

SECTION B; Continuous Assessment Strategies at 'A' level

- 4) How do your teachers check/assess your work daily? (*Tick those that apply to you*)

Oral Test	
Written Tests	
Assignments	
Projects	
Recap Exercises	
Checklists	
Observation	
Questionnaires	

5) What do your teachers use **most** to assess your achievement?

i) Tests

ii) Assignments

iii) Projects

iv) Others Specify.....

6) How often do your teachers carry out the following to check your progress? (*Tick(✓) the most Appropriate*)

Strategies	Very Often	Often	Not Often	Never
Oral Tests				
Written Tests				
Take-home Assignments				
Projects				
Recap Exercises				
Checklists				
Observation				
Questionnaires				

7) When do your teachers give you the following tasks ? (*Answer by ticking the most appropriate box*).

Period	Oral Tests	Written Tests	Take-home Assignments	Projects	Recap Exercises	Checklists	Observation
Daily							
Weekly							
Fortnight							
Monthly							
Half-term							
Termly							

SECTION C

Continuous Assessment Strategies and students' performance at 'A' level

8) Do daily tests, assignments, Recap Exercises, self-work (projects) relate to your performance in the following ways? (Answer by ticking the most Appropriate or your choice)

CA- Continuous Assessment

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. CA enables me to revise from time to time				
2. The more I attempt CA, the more confident and ready I become for the final exam.				
3. When teacher gives me quick feedback, I devise ways of improving.				
4. CA improves my understanding than cramming work.				
5. I learn answering techniques and question approach methods through CA and get ready for the finals.				
6. Continuous assessment helps me to master the notes.				
7. CA arouses my desire to pay attention and concentrate in class.				
8. CA assessment helps me to interact with the teachers mainly when doing corrections.				

APPENDIX C

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR DIRECTOR OF STUDIES

1) Is there Continuous Assessment in your school?

.....
.....

2) What are some of the Continuous Assessment strategies used in 'A' level in your school?.....

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3) How are they carried out?

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4) What is your view on the contribution of Continuous Assessment to students' performance?

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.....

5) What is the best Continuous Assessment strategy that you would recommend to teachers and why?.....

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6) What suggestions would you make so that teachers can improve on the strategies of Continuous Assessment?

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End

Appendix D
Focused Group Discussion Guide

Dear Teachers:

Please feel free to say anything that you feel is important to the discussion as per the topic. All information is kept confidentially and handled professionally.

Introduction:

Topic: **‘Continuous Assessment and Students’ Performance in ‘A’ Level in Secondary schools of Masaka District.’**

Give the reasons for the discussion:

1. To find out the continuous assessment strategies
2. To find out the contribution of continuous assessment strategies to students’ performance
3. Teachers perception on whether students exposed to various continuous assessment strategies perform better in the final exams.

Ask teachers to give their views, perceptions and opinions in whatever way they wish.

Thank you