

# COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MAKURDI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE- NIGERIA.

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## Abstract

Nigerian secondary schools are faced with the problem of assessment, from planning to execution and interpretation of its results. This has often led to erroneous educational decisions and policies. The study was aimed at comparing the mean performance of students in School-Based Assessment (SBA) with their mean performance in Certificate Examinations (WASSCE and SSCE) with a view to determining if there was any significant difference in the mean scores. Ex-Post Facto research design was used. The instrument for data collection was the proforma designed by the researcher and named "Instrument of Comparative Students' Performance in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examination" (ICSPSBACE). Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study which had a population of all the 2,474 Senior Secondary School students that graduated during the 2014/2015 academic session in Makurdi Local Government area of Benue State. Random and cluster sampling techniques were used to sample 741 subjects for the study. Mean counts and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while hypothesis were tested using ANOVA at 0.05 significant levels. The results showed that, students in Makurdi Local Government area of Benue state performed well in SBA, WASSCE and NECO SSCE since their mean scores in each of the examinations was above the bench mark of 45.0. The study recommended that, teachers of Makurdi Local Government should maintain the standard that has made the success possible.

**Key words:** Comparative, Performance, School-Based Assessment, Certificate Examination.

## Introduction

Secondary education as defined by the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) is the education given to students after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The purpose of secondary education in Nigeria among other things is to prepare students for tertiary level of education. Assessment is a veritable tool to determine who proceeds from one level of education to the next level. It is among the reasons why assessment has become a very vital component of secondary education in Nigeria. It is best described as an action to determine the importance, size or value of teaching and learning (Ojerinde, 2014).

Assessment is viewed by Harbor-Peters (1999) as a mechanism whereby the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour are accounted for in a systematic way for the purpose of guiding and improving learning and performance of students. Adejoh and Obinne (2013) corroborated this when they viewed assessment as a fact finding activity that describes

conditions that exist at a particular time which however, does not concern itself with the explanation of the underlying reasons nor recommendations for action. Alonge (2004) went a little further to posit that, assessment involves the system of testing as well as measurement but more involving than either testing or measurement. It is basically for decision making about students, policy, curriculum and programmes.

There are different levels of students' assessment. Folajogun (2012) categorized assessment into school-based, public examinations and international assessments. The purpose of assessment is to promote teaching and learning. The assessment base should be broadened to include not only the teachers but also all other important stake holders that impact positively on the students' readiness, capacity and interest to learn. These include subject teachers, class peers, parents and relevant education agencies.

Students spend the best part of their lives with their teachers and it is through teachers' assessments that one can better understand their capabilities. To rely solely or to a large extent on the one time external examination in assessing students' capabilities in the views of Monday, Ikiroma and Nwogwugwu (2014) will obscure the vision of the teacher and deny them the voice of creativity. Teachers are involved in the assessment of students on a day to day basis. However, the fruits of their hard labor are easily swallowed by the external examinations which are prepared by an external body. In support of this view, Odey and Abubakar (2014) posited that, School – Based Assessment provides the teachers with greater responsibility of designing quality assessment for the purpose of assessing students' academic outcomes despite the fact that it is faced with implementation challenges ranging from training of teachers in assessment techniques, commitment of teachers, large class size among others

In recent years, assessment of student's performance has been receiving greater attention of teachers, parents, researchers and educational systems. This attention perhaps, has highlighted assessment as integral to the teaching and learning process. Assessment is viewed by Harbor-Peters (1999) as a mechanism whereby the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour are accounted for in a systematic way for the purpose of guiding and improving learning and performance of students. Adejoh and Obinne (2013) corroborated this when they viewed assessment as a fact finding activity that describes conditions that exist at a particular time which however, does not concern itself with the explanation of the underlying reasons nor recommendations for action. Alonge (2004) went a little further to posit that, assessment involves the system of testing as well as measurement but more involving than either testing or measurement. It is basically for decision making about students, policy, curriculum and programmes.

### **School-Based Assessment**

There are different levels of students' assessment. Folajogun (2012) categorized assessment into School-Based, Public Examinations and International Assessments. School-Based Assessment (SBA) is carried out in the school by the class teachers. Kayode as cited in Omole & Akawu (2013) viewed School-Based Assessment as a continuous assessment that takes place in the school premises. It is the assessment that is planned, organized and administered by the teachers of a school. It includes class work, assignments, weekly and monthly tests, field trip reports, laboratory experiment reports, as well as terminal and annual examinations.

The major distinction between School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examination is that, the former is planned, administered and interpreted by teachers of the students and the latter is not in the control of the teachers of the students. Despite the difference, it is expected that the

scores obtained by students in School-Based Assessment should be a reflection of the scores obtained in the same subjects by the same candidates in Certificate Examination. If this assertion holds, then the question that might arise would be: are scores of candidates in Certificate Examinations the same as in School-Based Assessment? Assessment for certification in Nigeria at the primary school by policy and tertiary levels is school-based while that at the secondary school is external. Why is the case of secondary education different?

### **Implementation of Continuous Assessment.**

The implementation of the policy on continuous assessment is fraught by some problems. Harbour-Peters(1992) identified some of the problems which include Comparability of standards which arise from differences in the quality of tests and other assessment instruments used in different schools.

Besides, record keeping and continuity of records is another implementation challenge that affects continuous assessment. Continuous assessment will be more meaningful when there is meticulous keeping of accurate records for each student since these records are expected to be cumulative. There is also the need for uniformity in the kinds of records and the format for keeping these records.

The inadequacy of storage facilities for continuous assessment records hampers its implementation. Most schools at both the primary and post-primary levels are poorly equipped for such a function. Other implementation bottlenecks identified include unqualified personnel, large number of students, and misinterpretation of guidelines.

Gani & Attah (2013) revealed that, many teachers in private secondary schools do not fully comply with the basic characteristics of continuous assessment. This, they blamed on the failure of schools' Continuous Assessment Committees to monitor or plan activities that could improve assessment in their schools. They further revealed that some teachers do not develop and use valid assessment instruments for assessing the three domains. Again most teachers do not use assessment to correct students and improve on learning. Consequently, they concluded that students' overall abilities are not assessed and there is no diagnosis and remediation of learning difficulties.

Fab, Ezechukwu & Okorie (2015) Posited that, School-Based Assessment strategies enhance students' performance in senior secondary schools. In their study of students of economics, their results showed that students who were assessed using School-Based Assessment strategies achieved significantly higher than those who were assessed with assessment of learning (summative assessment) strategies.

### **Academic Performance**

The fundamental premise of learning is for a change, modification or improvement in behavior (Alonge, 2004). Performance of a student therefore, relates to how he or she functions or exhibits mastery, modification or change in behavior based on the defined objectives that are expected to be attained after some levels of instruction. Academic Performance is thus the level of functioning or behavior exhibited by a student that is summarized as a score or a grade. This usually comes as a decision that is taken after a measure of sample of behavior is made based on some defined standard or criterion.

Tsheko (2008) posited that, there is the urgent need to change the educational experience of learners to incorporate the issues of developing critical thinking. He further stressed that the individualized instruction and assessment strategies that go with this requires a lot of creativity

on the side of the teacher. His findings revealed that SBA was the only strategy that could help in achieving these modern goals. He however recommended the retraining of teachers to be very versatile in the use of assessment tools that are needed to monitor the progress of students to ensure that scores awarded were valid and reliable.

Different tests make different assumptions and are guided by different set of principles which teachers are expected to be well acquainted with. The considerations in developing an achievement test are not the same with an aptitude test likewise the principles guiding the development of a norm-referenced test and criterion-referenced tests. According to Nworgu (1992), application of considerations relevant to a particular type of test in the development of another type of test will be improper. Achievement tests are constructed to assess the extent to which students has mastered specific areas of knowledge to which they have been exposed. Achievement tests therefore concentrates on specific content areas that have to be sampled adequately by items of suitable statistical properties. Such items have been described by Ferguson in Nworgu (1992) as contributing positively in the differentiation of individuals or description of individual differences.

There are challenges of maintaining the integrity of the performance of students in public examinations in Nigeria. Arijesuyo & Adeyoju (2012) looked at the ethical issues surrounding the public examination in Nigeria. The authors affirmed that the qualitative merit of examination or test-taking for diagnostic, placement and quality control is usually measured in terms of its appropriateness and the quality assurance of its outcomes. The authors further posited that, for any examination to be credible, it must possess key elements which are validity and reliability. However, these key elements can only be present if examination is free and fair, devoid of cheating and all sorts of malpractices. The authors lamented the behavior of parents, teachers, students and staffers of examination bodies as well as other stakeholders which in recent times are seen to be detrimental to the nation's educational survival since they support examination malpractices. They recommended the establishment of National Commission for Examination Ethics (NCEE) as an organ under the Federal Ministry of Education to be responsible for overseeing all matters relating to promotion of examination ethics. In addition, they advocated for the establishment of Anti-Examination Malpractice Brigades in schools.

### **Certificate Examination.**

Certificate examination is the form of assessment that is carried out with the aim of awarding a certificate indicating the level of mastery by the examinee. Certificate examination also known as external examination is an examination arranged by people outside a student's own school, college or university ([www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary)). Certificate examination is the assessment organized and administered by examination bodies outside the school. They are external to the control of the schools and produce summative evaluation of candidates.

In Nigeria, certificate examination started with the arrival of western education. Competency examinations were adopted for the certification of students on completion of each school level (Adejoh & Obinne, 2013). This brought about the first school leaving certificate (FSLC) for primary school leavers and external examinations conducted by some external bodies for secondary school leavers. Some of the external examinations were organized by some agencies like Cambridge University, London University, City and Guilds of London; Royal Society of Arts, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN).

Later, indigenous examination bodies gradually sprang up in Nigeria. These include the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) which conducts the West African Senior School

Certificate Examination (WASSCE); the National Business and Technical Examinations Board(NABTEB), which is responsible for the conduct of the National Technical Certificate (NTC)/National Business Certificate (NBC) examinations as well as the advance level versions in the following trades/discipline:General Education, Business Trades, Engineering/Construction Trades and Miscellaneous Trades(<http://www.nabtebnigeria.org/nabteb-in-brief/>); National Examinations Council (NECO) is responsible for the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE). All these examinations with regard to Senior Secondary School Certificate are taken at the end of the Senior Secondary School programme and are not school-based but externally conducted.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigerian secondary schools are faced with the problem of assessment, from planning, execution and interpretation of its results. This has often led to erroneous educational decisions and policies (Unugo & Ibeh, 2013). One of the reasons cited for the use of external assessment for certification at the secondary school level in Nigeria is that, many teachers are not quite knowledgeable in the use of assessment tools which results in faulty construction of items that do not reflect adequately the three domains of learning – cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains (Nworgu, 1992). He further explained that, most teacher-made test items are sub-standard. They are not subjected to trial testing to ensure their validity and reliability. Again, most teacher-made tests are perceived to be either skew to testing lower cognitive levels to the negligence of the manipulative skills, attitudes, and values and of course critical thinking which the student must have acquired during the period of learning (Fab & Ezechukwu, 2015).

Again, the prevalence of examination malpractice in our public examinations leaves doubts as to the quality and efficiency of School-Based Assessments as a tool for monitoring the progress of teaching and learning in schools. There is hope that if School-Based Assessment is effectively and professionally constructed and administered, this would definitely improve the quality of teaching and learning and hence, academic achievement in both internal and external examinations. Teachers spend more time with the students.They are in a better position to give a valid and more authentic assessment of their students and hence, it is obvious that, the performance of students in School-Based Assessment should predict the performances of students in external examinations. However, the statements above are mere assumptions that need empirical evidence. It is not quite certain whether the mean performance of students in School-Based Assessment and certificate examination in Senior Secondary Schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue state are different. These problems have prompted the researcher to conduct this study in order to compare the performance of students in the two modes of assessment to ascertain whether there is a difference between the performances of students in the two modes of assessments.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to compare students' performance in School-Based Assessment and certificate examinations in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State with the view to establishing if there were significant differences. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- (i) Compare the mean scores of Students in School-Based Assessment and their corresponding scores in WASSCE and NECO SSCE in English Language, Mathematics and Civic Education.
- (ii) To determine if there were significant differences between the performances of students in SBA, WASSCE and NECO SSCE in English Language, Mathematics and Civic Education.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- (i) What are the mean scores of Students in School-Based Assessment certificate examinations in English?
- (ii) What are the mean scores of Students in School-Based Assessment and certificate examinations in Mathematics?
- (iii) What are the mean scores of Students in School-Based Assessment and certificate examinations in Civic Education?

#### **Statement of Hypothesis**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to be tested at .05 level of significance.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examinations in English.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examinations in Mathematics.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examinations in Civic Education.

#### **Methodology**

The study adopted an ex-post facto research design and was carried out in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. The population of the study was all the 2,474 senior secondary school students that graduated in the 38 Government approved Senior Secondary schools (Public and Private) during the 2014/2015 academic session in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue state, Nigeria.

Random sampling technique was used to sample 8 schools while cluster sampling was used to draw the 741 students for study. The instrument used for data collection was a proforma called "Instrument of Comparative Students' Performance in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examination" (ICSPSBACE). It was designed by the researchers and was used to collect data on the performance (Scores/grades) of the selected candidates in the listed subjects (English, Mathematics and Civic Education) of their annual result while in SSII during the 2013/2014 session to constitute SBA scores. The same instrument was used to obtain data on the same students on their WASSCE (WAEC) and SSCE (NECO) performance in the listed subjects. The grades of students in WASSCE and SSCE NECO were translated to raw scores by taking the mid-points of the ranges of the respective grades.

The data obtained was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question. The decision rule was that any mean obtained that was equal to or greater than 45.0 was considered as a good performance while that below 45.0 was regarded as poor. ANOVA was used to test whether there was any significant difference between the performances of the students in School-Based Assessment and certificate examinations at .05 levels of significance.

#### **Results and Discussion**

The results have been presented and discussed in order of research questions.

**Research Question 1:** What are the mean scores of Students in School-Based Assessment and certificate examinations in English?

The result of the study in Table 1 indicates the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment, WAEC and NECO in English Language. It could be noted that all the three examinations (SBA, WAEC and NECO) had mean rating greater than 45.0. This shows that, students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State performed well in SBA

and Certificate examinations in English Language. Again, the result shows that, even though, WAEC had the highest performance, a higher variability of scores was noticed in SBA followed by WAEC while the scores of students had the least variability in NECO.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of performance of students in English.**

Subject Area	Exam Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
English	WAEC	247	59.64	6.80
	NECO	247	51.68	5.61
	SBA	247	55.97	9.69

**Research Question 2:** What are the mean scores of Students in School-Based Assessment and certificate examinations in Mathematics?

The result from table 2 shows the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment, WAEC and NECO in Mathematics. It could be noted that, all the three examinations (SBA, WAEC and NECO) had mean rating greater than the bench mark of 45.0. This indicates that, students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State performed well in Mathematics in all the three examinations. Scores of students had the highest variability in SBA (14.22) followed by NECO (8.69.64) while WAEC had the least variability (8.65) of scores in Mathematics.

**Table 2: The mean performance of students in Mathematics.**

Subject Area	Exam Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mathematics	WAEC	247	47.87	8.65
	NECO	247	57.87	8.69
	SBA	247	48.41	14.22

**Research Question 3:** What are the mean scores of Students in School-Based Assessment and certificate examinations in Civic Education?

The result of the study as presented in Table 3 indicates a positive performance in the mean scores of students in SBA, WAEC and NECO in Civic Education. It could be noted that, all the three modes of assessment had mean scores above 45.0. This shows that, students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State performed well in Civic Education in the three examinations. Again, SBA had the highest variation of scores (12.32) followed by WAEC (10.57) while NECO had the least variation of scores (5.40).

**Table 3: The mean performance of students in Civic Education.**

Subject Area	Exam Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Civic Education	WAEC	247	57.32	10.57
	NECO	247	54.38	5.40
	SBA	247	68.73	12.32

**Hypothesis**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examination in English Language.

To test this null hypothesis, the One-Way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore whether there was no significant difference between the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examinations in English Language. There was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  in the scores of the three modes of Assessments:  $F=68.472$ ,  $P= .000$ .

**Table 4: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of scores of students in English Language**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between groups	7832.456	2	3916.228	68.472	.000
Within Groups	42209.741	738	57.195		
Total	<b>50042.197</b>	<b>740</b>			

**Hypothesis Two.**

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examinations in Mathematics.

One-Way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore whether there was no significant difference between the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examinations in Mathematics. There was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  in the scores of the three modes of Assessments:  $F=66.437$ ,  $P= .000$ .

**Table 5 Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of scores of students in Mathematics**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between groups	15621.798	2	7810.899	66.437	.000
Within Groups	86765.587	738	117.569		
Total	<b>102387.385</b>	<b>740</b>			

**Hypothesis Three.**

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examination in Civic Education.



The One-Way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that, there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of students in School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examination in Civic Education at the  $p < .05$   $F = 145.500$ ,  $P = .000$ .

**Table 6 Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of scores of students in Civic Education**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between groups	28389.579	2	14194.789	145.500	.000
Within Groups	71998.543	738	97.559		
Total	<b>100388.121</b>	<b>740</b>			

### **Discussion of Results**

The findings of the study have revealed that, students in Makurdi LGA of Benue State performed well in both SBA and certificate examinations in English Language. This finding is perhaps contrary to the opinion of Gani & Attah (2013) who submitted that teachers do not adhere to the qualities of SBA and hence making it not to be comparable to external examinations. Teachers use SBA in preparing students for external examinations. If the mean performance in the external examinations and that of SBA is all above the bench mark, it means teachers in Makurdi Local Government are using SBA properly in monitoring teaching and learning. However, the study found that, even though, the students performed well in all the examinations, there was a consistent higher variability of scores in the SBA than in the certificate examinations. This tends to be in agreement with Monday, Ikiroma and Nwogwugwu (2014) who said, the class teachers are in the best position to tell the extent to which the students have mastered the content. This could also be explained on the fact that, scores in the external examinations were midpoints of the ranges of grades obtained by the sampled students. This might account for the low variation in the spread of the scores as noticed.

The study revealed that, the performance of student in Mathematics in Makurdi LGA of Benue State in SBA, WASSCE and NECO SSCE was also good since it was above the bench mark of 45.0. This was also evident in the cluster mean of 51.39 which was above the bench mark. The performance in Civic Education by the students in Makurdi LGA in the three Examinations was again above the bench mark of 45.0. This showed the students performed well in SBA, WASSCE and NECO SSCE. This was in disagreement with the submission of Nworgu (1992) that teacher-made test items are substandard. The students are prepared for WASSCE and NECO SSCE using SBA. If the teacher-made items were below standard as submitted, it would have affected the performance of the students negatively.

Again, the study found out that, there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the students in English Language, Mathematics and Civic Education in the three examinations (WASSCE, NECO SSCE and SBA) in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation.**

Schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State Nigeria are doing well in both School-Based Assessment and Certificate Examinations. The students are well prepared for their certificate examinations through SBA. It is therefore recommended that, the academic standard used by teachers in Makurdi Local Government Area should be maintained.

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