



Correlation Between Continuous Assessment in Accountancy Modules and Students' Academic Performance in Higher Learning Institutions: The Case of Institute of Accountancy Arusha in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the correlation between continuous assessment and final examination scores. The study was conducted at the Institute of Accountancy Arusha, Dar es Salaam Campus. The study used an explanatory sequential design with a sample of 75 respondents for the quantitative phase and 5 respondents for the qualitative phase (total sample of 80 respondents). The study used secondary data for the quantitative phase, the data were tested for normality by using the Shapiro-Wilk test, and they were found to be normally distributed. The analysis was both qualitative and quantitative by using content analysis and Pearson correlation respectively. The findings show that there is a moderate positive correlation between continuous assessment and final score for basic technician certificate in accountancy students while for the ordinary diploma of Accountancy year one students' score had insignificant correlation. The findings also have shown that factors such as the effectiveness of assessment plans may dictate the correlation between the two. The study recommends that for continuous assessment to predict good performance of students in final exams; tests, and assignments should be composed basing on the assessment plans to make them stronger in establishing correlation between Continuous Assessment and Final Examination. Also, it is recommended that the academic support department must use moderators to moderate tests and assignment, moderation should not only be during final examinations.

Keywords: Continuous Assessments, Accountancy Modules, Students' Academic Performance, Final Examinations, Institute Of Accountancy Arusha

1. Introduction

Continuous assessment commenced in the 20th century and it is documented that continuous assessment became popular in the 21st century when European higher learning institutions adopted it quickly following high interest that was placed by government agencies wanting to now the performance and achievement of students (Morales et al, 2022). Some of studies have

realized that continuous assessment is very important because it aims to enhance student learning and understanding of a subject and so achieve better educational outcomes (Reboredo, 2017). In parallel to what Reboredo (2017) said, Al-Maskari (2015) when comparing the continuous assessment and final exams score he found that continuous assessment is an important component of any teaching and learning

process. It is the most influential factor in shaping what and how students learn. While explaining the effectiveness of continuous assessment, Reboredo (2017) argued that the assessment of learning provides objective evidences necessary in the decision-making process in education for both the students and the lecturers. Students become aware of their strength and areas that need improvement in the subject assessed. Educators can also improve their teaching strategies. Reina-Paz et al (2014) confirm that continuous assessment is a true tool for monitoring and assessment at a distance university.

Little studies have been conducted in universities and particularly in accountancy modules, most of studies have been conducted in general modules that does not include accountancy modules. The findings from the already conducted studies show that continuous assessment in secondary schools have positive effect in their final exams. For example, Adigun (2016) conducted a study on the impact of continuous assessment on students' academic performance in the Ilorin metropolis, he found that continuous assessment helps students to remember what they learnt; therefore, they do better in their final exams. Kishnah et al. (2013) conducted a study on the impact of continuous assessments on the final marks of computer science modules at the University of Mauritius, the study used a sample of 14 modules, and score of 727 students were analyzed and found the strong correlation between coursework marks and final examination. Their study also found that there were only three cases where the correlation coefficient was less than 40%, there was also one module where students performed well in their final exam than in the coursework. Matogwa (2021) conducted a study in

Tanzania on the roles of continuous assessment towards students' performance in secondary school national examinations he found that internal examinations can predict the performance of students in their national examinations to some extent. Matogwa (2021) also found that the performance of students also is attributed to the competence of teachers, availability of learning and teaching materials, the time spent by students for self-studying and the quality of learning infrastructures. With these findings, the already known is that the continuous assessment are effective in determining the performance of students in final examinations in secondary schools and in modules other than accountancy modules. Therefore, there was a need to conduct a mixed study by using an explanatory sequential design to study the effectiveness of CA on Final Exams in accountancy modules.

The findings of this study can be used to strengthen the continuous assessments where they seem to be weak and fail to perform what is supposed to be measured. The study also can help to make teachers aware of how they implement their respective assessment plans for final examinations. The assessment plan should go hand in hand with continuous assessment.

2. Literature Review

This study was guided by the constructivism theory of learning which states that the learner builds upon his or her previous experience and understanding to construct a new understanding (Fosnot, 2013). Jean Piaget is known as one of the first theorists in constructivism. His theories indicate that humans create knowledge through the interaction between their experiences and ideas. His view of constructivism is the inspiration for radical

constructivism due to his idea that the individual is at the centre of the knowledge creation and acquisition process. Therefore, this theory supports the idea that previous internal exams (tests and other assignments) may stand as a foundation of experience that can help the students to construct new knowledge that can help them to perform even better in their final exams.

2.1 Empirical Studies

Egede, & Omiegbe (2014) conducted the study on the relationship between the continuous assessment (CA) and examination scores of students in four (4) courses taught in the Primary Education Studies (PES) in Agbor, Delta State of Nigeria. The courses used in this study were the Basic Science and Technology components of the curriculum of PES in the minimum standards for Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Their continuous assessment scores were correlated with their examination scores for each of the courses in each of the three academic sessions. The Pearson product moment coefficients were computed for each pair of scores for each course in each academic session. The twelve (12) coefficients computed are all positive and significant at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates a positive and significant relationship between the CA scores and the examination scores. Those who had higher CA scores (who also attended more number of lectures) had higher performance in the examination.

Rezigalla (2014) conducted a study on the effect of the continuous assessment (CA) on the final result (FR) of students. The study used retrospective cross-sectional design, student's scores were obtained from students' results of the CA, the final assessment (FA) and the FR. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, version

20) was used for data entry and analysis. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were applied. It was found that both CA and FA show a high level of correlation with the FR and it was higher with the CA. Correlation coefficient was higher between CA and FA than between FA and the FR. t-test showed a significant difference between the CA, FA and the FR.

Sangoniya & Gbolagade (2022) correlated the performance of internal assessment termed continuous assessment with the final assessment scores called semester examination in Mathematics courses in Colleges of Education in South-west, Nigeria. Ten public colleges of education in south-west, Nigeria comprising four federal colleges of Education and six state Colleges of Education were randomly sampled for the study. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between continuous assessment and final examination grade scores of students in mathematics based on gender. However, there was significant relationship between continuous assessment and final examination grade scores of students in mathematics based on institution ownership.

Apaloo, Kombat, & Mohammed (2022) looked at the link between continuous assessment and students' end-of-semester exam scores at Kumasi Technical University's (KSTU) in the Department of Accountancy and Accounting Information Systems. The study used a correlational design as its research approach. The study population comprises third year Higher National Diploma Accounting with computing students in the Department of Accounting Information Systems and Accountancy at Kumasi Technical University (KTU). The data was gathered and analysed using students' test analysis and the descriptive research method of Pearson's correlation

coefficients (r) in SPSS version 26. It was revealed that there was a significant difference in the values, mean score of actual performance, and the value of 3. Regular and proper administration of continuous assessment will boast the students' actual performance.

Musa & Ibrahim (2021) investigated the relationship between students' continuous assessment and semester examination scores in educational psychology courses among undergraduate students of faculty of Education Gombe State University. The Population of the study was level two, three, and four hundred students. With a total population of 1764. Purposive sampling was used where the whole population was used as a sample since the population academic performance scores was accessible in the exam's office. The result revealed there is no significant relationship between continuous assessments in EDUC 203 (Educational Psychology) and semester examination. It also found significant relationship between continuous assessment and semester examination scores in human learning (EDUC 309) and adolescents' psychology (EDUC 405).

Ilogho (2022) investigated the predictive validity of continuous assessment scores on end of semester examination scores among undergraduate students of Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba-Akoko (AAUA) Ondo State. Two null offered direction to the study using an ex. post factory research design. The population of the study comprised all undergraduate students of the faculty of education AAUA. Random sampling technique was employed in selecting a sample of 320 students from two departments in the faculty of Education of 100 and 200 levels. A proforma was used as an instrument for data collection. Regression analysis and t-test were

used in testing the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The finding revealed that there was a significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and end-of-semester examination scores and the performance of education undergraduate students. The result indicated that 100-level students had better continuous assessment scores than 200-level students. Continuous assessment scores predict final scores in end of semester examination.

Faremi & Faremi (2020) designed to investigate how Continuous Assessment (henceforth, CA) marks in Educational Administration and Planning courses for undergraduate students will significantly predict their final examination marks. The study adopted an ex post facto research design with a total of 221 undergraduates, who registered for a course in the second semester, at the Faculty of Education, Osun State University, Nigeria. The undergraduates' scores in continuous assessment and examination scores at the end of the semester formed the data for the study. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed that Biology students had the highest mean value when compared with the mean of undergraduates from other specialised areas. The regression analysis result reveals that the CA significantly predicts undergraduate students' performance in semester examinations and makes the best contribution to students' performance in Educational Administration and Planning.

Kishnah et al (2013) conducted a study on the impact of continuous assessments on the final marks of computer science modules at the University of Mauritius, the study used a sample of 14 modules, and scores of 727 students were analyzed and found the strong correlation

between coursework marks and final examination. Their study also found that there were only three cases where the correlation coefficient was less than 40%, there was also one module where students performed well in their final exam than in the coursework.

Matogwa (2021) conducted a study in Tanzania on the roles of continuous assessment towards students' performance in secondary school national examinations he found that internal examinations can predict the performance of students in their national examinations to some extent. Matogwa (2021) also found that the performance of students is attributed to the competence of teachers, the availability of learning and teaching materials, the time spent by students for self-studying and the quality of learning infrastructures.

From the findings, it was concluded that continuous assessment scores are a good predictor of undergraduate students' performance in semester examinations. It was recommended that there should be thorough supervision of the CA; all processes must be monitored in Nigerian Universities for quality assurance.

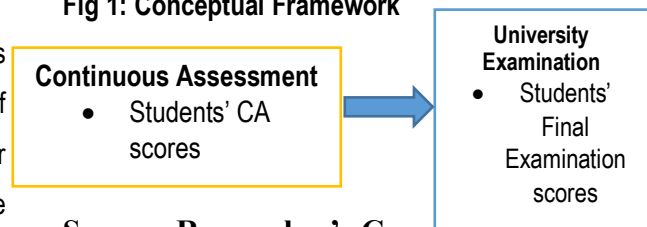
Little studies have been conducted in universities particularly in accountancy modules. The findings show that continuous assessment in secondary schools has positive effect on their final exams. For example, Adigun (2016) found that continuous assessment helps students to remember what they learnt; therefore, they do better in their final exams. The current study aims to fill the existing gap by studying the correlation between CA in accountancy modules and the final examination scores of students.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Basing on the constructivism theory of learning which states that the learner builds upon his or her previous experience and understanding to construct a new understanding (Fosnot, 2013). The researcher considered continuous assessment as previous experiences of the students, these experiences have a direct relationship with the expected performance of students in their final exam. This relationship is confirmed by the empirical studies that show that continuous assessment in some modules have stood as a determinant of students' performance in their final exams (Musa & Ibrahim, 2021; Faremi & Faremi, 2020; Apaloo, Kombat, & Mohammed, 2022; Matogwa, 2020).

Figure 1 shows this relationship concisely.

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher's Concept (2022)

3. Methodology

This study was conducted at the Institute of Accountancy Arusha, Dar es Salaam Campus, Tanzania. In this study, the researcher used an explanatory sequential design. In an explanatory sequential design, quantitative data collection and analysis occurs first, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2018). One of the reasons for using an explanatory sequential design in this study is that qualitative data was expected to explain and contextualize the quantitative findings. Another reason is to ensure Contextualization (allowing the researcher to put findings in context and add richer detail to the conclusions). Again, the reason for using this design is to ensure the credibility of the

findings. Using different methods to collect data on the same subject can make the results more credible. If the qualitative and quantitative data converge, this strengthens the validity of the conclusions.

Furthermore, The sample of this study comprised 89 students with basic technician certificates of accountancy, students from the ordinary diploma of accountancy year one, ordinary diploma of accountancy year two who did their final exams in the second semester of 2021/2022, and teachers. Teachers were involved in the qualitative phase of the current study to express their views about the quantitative findings.

The sample of this study is tabulated below;

Table 1: Description of the Sample

TYPE OF SAMPLE	SIZE OF THE SAMPLE	SAMPLING TECHNIQUES
BTCA	67	Population sample
ODA I	08	Population sample
Lecturers	05	Purposive sampling
TOTAL	80	

This study used secondary data from the examination office of the Institute of Accountancy Arusha (IAA) in Tanzania. The secondary data was for 67 students of basic technician certificate of accountancy (BTCA) and 8 students who did ordinary diploma in accountancy year one.

Since this study used secondary data from accountancy modules students, the data for continuous assessment scores and final exam scores were tested for normality by using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The outliers were

checked and removed from the data to make them normally distributed. The normality test for all secondary data shows that P-values were greater than 0.05 (0.98, 0.83 to mention few) showing that the data were normally distributed.

Table 2: Test for Normality for BTCA

To run a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), data must be normally distributed, the Shapiro-Wilk test was done and it was found that p-values were greater than 0.05 which is a requirement and therefore, the data were found to be normally distributed.

Tests of Normality for BTCA			
	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
CA SCORES	.969	67	.098
FINAL EXAM SCORES	.968	67	.083
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction			

Table 3: Tests of Normality for ODA I

The data shows that the Shapiro-Wilk test has a P-value (0.125 and 0.190) which is greater than 0.05 meaning that the data are normally distributed. Therefore, it was possible to run for Pearson correlation.

Tests of Normality for ODA I			
	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
FINAL SCORE	.871	9	.125
CA SCORE	.888	9	.190
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.			
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction			

The data analysis was done by using SPSS to run a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to identify the correlation between the independent variable and

dependent variable (continuous assessment scores and the final exams between a certificate of accountancy students' continuous assessment and their final exams. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was done to identify the main themes and discuss them accordingly.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

4.1.1 Gender

This study involved both males and female. Even secondary data were from both male and female students. The summary of this characteristic is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency (%)
Male	32 (40)
Female	48 (60)
Total	80(100)

Source: Research Data (2023)

From *table 4*, it shows that 32 (40%) respondents who participated in this study were male while 48 (60%) were females meaning that accountancy modules at the Institute of accountancy Arusha particularly in the sample under study were dominated by females.

4.1.2 Age of the Respondents

The current study involved respondents with different ages. This characteristic is shown in table 5;

Table 5: Age of the Respondents

Age (years)	Frequency (%)
15-18	41 (51.3)
19-22	22 (27.5)
23-26	10 (12.5)
27+	7 (8.7)
Total	80 (100)

Research Data (2023)

The data on the age of the respondents show that most of the respondents had 15-18 and 19-22 years that were equal to 51.3% and 27.5% of the total sample respectively. Other respondents were in the group of 23-26 and 27 and above respectively. This data shows that accountancy modules are studied by students ranging mostly from 15 years to 27 and above depending on the level of study.

4.2. Correlation between Continuous Assessment Scores and Final Exams Score for BTCA

The analysis for BTCA was done where the variables were two; Continuous assessment scores and final exam scores. The number of respondents involved in the analysis was 67 who did elements of the accounts module. The results are shown in the table of correlation and the Pearson correlation and the p-value are indicated in the table.

Table 6: Pearson Correlations between CA Scores and Final Exam Scores for BTCA

Correlations			
		CA SCORES	FINAL EXAM SCORES
CA SCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.500**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	67	67
FINAL EXAM SCORES	Pearson Correlation	.500**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	67	67

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

SPSS Output (2023)

From *Table 6* which shows the Pearson correlations between CA scores and Final exam scores, the findings show that the Pearson correlation between CA scores and final exam scores is 0.500, this correlation is significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$. This means that, there is a moderate positive relationship or correlation of 0.05 between CA scores and the final exam. This also can be interpreted as the CA score can only predict the final score of the student in accountancy by 50% particularly for students who are studying basic technician certificate in accountancy. These findings concur with what Ilogho (2022) encountered when he was investigating the predictive validity of continuous assessment scores on end-of-semester examination scores among undergraduate students of Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba-Akoko (AAUA) Ondo State that there was a significant relationship between continuous assessment scores and end of semester examination scores and performance of education undergraduate students ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.05$). The result indicated that 100-level

students had better continuous assessment scores than 200-level students. Continuous assessment scores predict final scores in end of semester examination.

4.3 Pearson Correlations between CA Scores and Final Exam Scores for Ordinary Diploma in accountancy (ODA I) students

The second correlation analysis was done for the scores of ordinary diplomas in accountancy year one for both continuous assessment scores and final exam scores. Pearson correlation analysis was done for eight ordinary diploma students in accountancy in the module called Principles of Accounts. The results showing the Pearson correlation and the p-value are shown in *Table 7*.

Table 7: Pearson Correlations between CA Scores and Final Exam Scores for ODA I

Correlations			
		CA SCORE	FINAL SCORE
CA SCORE	Pearson Correlation	1	.537
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.136
	N	8	8
FINAL SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.537	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.136	
	N	8	8

Source: SPSS Output (2023)

The findings from *Table 7* shows that the Pearson correlation between CA scores and final score is 0.537 with a p-value ($0.136 > 0.05$). The benchmark for the Pearson correlation is that a good correlation starts from 0.5 to 1.00, if you run the Pearson correlation and get - 1.00 to 0.40, then the Pearson correlation will be weak

and to some points unacceptable. Therefore, the current findings do suggest that there was a moderate positive correlation between CA scores for students studying ordinary diploma in accountancy (year one), this moderate positive correlation was insignificant because its $p\text{-value} > 0.05$. These findings mean that the correlation between CA scores and final exam scores for ODA I is insignificant. The current findings relate to what Matogwa (2021) found when he conducted a study in Tanzania on the roles of continuous assessment towards students' performance in secondary school national examinations he found that internal examinations can predict the performance of students in their national examinations to some extent. The only difference is that the current findings on ODA I have an insignificant correlation between CA and FE.

These quantitative findings informed the researcher to come up with a qualitative objective that focused on exploring perceptions of teachers about the reasons why students may perform poorly in their final exams when compared to their good continuous assessment scores

4.3 Perceptions of Lecturers on the reasons why students may perform poorly in final exams while they have good continuous assessment scores

Data for this objective was collected from five respondents through interviews, these five respondents were lecturers. The analysis was done by using thematic analysis whereby the researcher identified the main themes from the quotations. Then, the main themes are discussed in the empirical studies. The following are the main themes that emerged during the interview;

4.3.1 Effectiveness of Assessment Plans

During an interview, this theme was extracted from the verbatim quotes that were recorded in the interview transcript. The respondent said that the ability of CA to bring a strong positive correlation with final exams depends much on the effectiveness of assessment plans that instructors use in their teaching activities. A respondent had the following to say;

"Effectiveness of CA in determining the final exam score depends much on the effectiveness of assessment plans for a particular module" (P1, 2023)

4.3.2 CA Measures Limited Area Compared to Final Exams

This was the second theme extracted from the interview. When the respondent was asked about the reasons why continuous assessment sometimes may fail in predicting good scores in the final examination, the respondent had this to say;

"CA may fail to help students perform well in their final exams because CA measures the small area of what students have studied compared to final exams, final exams measure extensive area"- (P2, 2023)

4.3.3 High Performance in Continuous Assessment Leads to Over-Confidence among Students

During the interview, it was revealed that high performance in continuous assessment sometimes might cause the student to have overconfidence among students. This aspect was found to affect the correlation between continuous assessment and final examination. This is shown through the verbatim quote that was provided by the respondent in the study area.

“Some students once they score high marks in CA, tend to have confidence believing that they will do better again even without concentrating much for final exam preparation”- (P3, 2023)

4.3.4 Continuous Assessments that do not Follow Assessment Plan

This was another theme that emerged during the interview. It was found that the correlation between continuous assessment and final examination scores might be affected by continuous assessment tests and assignments that do not follow the assessment plans that are prepared by the module instructors. Therefore, the respondent insisted that if the instructors do not follow their assessment plans as their guides it is then difficult to achieve a strong positive correlation between continuous assessment and final exams. The respondent had this to say;

“Some of the module instructors when they prepare tests and assignments do not follow their assessment plan, this makes it impossible for the CA to be used as a determinant of final performance” (P5, 2023)

4.3.5 Laziness of Students in their Preparation for Final Exams

The respondent from the study area through live conversation also identified laziness among students during their preparation for final exams. It was found that some students are very poor in their preparation. Once they achieve more in their continuous assessment, they feel that they will also perform well in final exams so for them it becomes difficult for them to prepare for their final exams.

“Good CA scores can forecast good performance of students in their final exams but the problem is that most students are lazy in their preparations for final exams”- (P4, 2023)

4.3.6 Late Tuition Fee Payment Frustrates Students During Final Examination Season

The issue of tuition fees was among the main themes that were identified during the interview session. It was found that most students are from poor families so paying tuition fees on time is a big challenge to these families. The respondents said that when the final exams are approaching, most students struggle so much to pay the tuition fees and some of them commence their exams very late compared to others. This situation may affect their results and affect the continuous assessment to correlate with the final examination scores. The respondent said that;

“Poor performance in final exams is because most students struggle much during the deadline of paying tuition fees this stands as a reason why their performance in CA sometimes is different from what they score in their final exams.” (P5, 2023)

After quantitative analysis through Pearson product-moment correlation, it was found that there was a significant moderate positive correlation between continuous assessment and final examination scores for the Basic technician certificate in accountancy while for students studying an ordinary diploma in accountancy year, I found that there was an insignificant moderate positive correlation between continuous assessment and final scores.

On the qualitative side, the respondents through their perceptions it was revealed that the continuous

assessment score might dictate the correlation between continuous assessment and final examination score because of some factors including the Effectiveness of assessment plans. In addition, continuous assessment measures limited area compared to final exams, high performance in continuous assessment leads to overconfidence among students, coursework assessments that do not follow the assessment plan, the laziness of students in their preparation for final exams and late tuition fee payment frustrates students during the final examination season.

The mixing point on the two findings is found on how the correlation between continuous assessment and final examination score can be found. The continuous assessment score alone cannot forecast or predict the good or poor performance of students in their final exams. When comparing the findings from quantitative and qualitative findings in objectives one and two respectively it shows that a correlation between continuous assessment scores and final exam scores can occur if the students and instructors play their part to ensure that what is performed in continuous assessment brings positive results in the final exams. In addition, a strong correlation between CA and the final examination may occur if students are committed to performing well in both continuous assessment and the final examination.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the current study, the researcher concludes that continuous assessment in accountancy modules especially for BTCA has a moderate positive correlation with final exam scores

while for diploma students there is an insignificant correlation with the final examination score. Reasons such as lack of seriousness among students in the final examination preparation season and instructors not obeying assessment plans in preparing continuous assessment tests and assignments may lead to insignificant correlations between CA scores and FE scores.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that for continuous assessments to predict the good performance of students in final exams; tests, and assignments should be composed based on the assessment plans to make them stronger in establishing a correlation between CA and FE. The academic support department must ensure that moderators' jobs should start with moderating tests and assignments rather than waiting for final examinations. Also, students should get prepared well for final exams and they should not allow overconfidence which is accelerated by high scores in their continuous assessments.

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