NURSING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AS MEANS OF ACADEMIC EVALUATION IN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, ENUGU CAMPUS.

BY

EZEAGUBA FELICIA ONUKWUBE.

PG/M.sc/07/46838

M.Sc. DISSERTATION

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING SCIENCES

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

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UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

ENUGU CAMPUS

SUPERVISOR: DR. (MRS.) N.P. OGBONNAYA

SEPTEMBER, 2015.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that I am responsible for the work submitted in this dissertation, that the original work is mine except as specified in acknowledgement and references, and that neither the dissertation nor the original work contained therein has been submitted to this University or any other institution for the award of a degree.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation has been approved for the award of Master of Science Degree in Nursing in the Department of Nursing Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty and Nurse Educators who will move nursing profession to greater height.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am humbly grateful to the Almighty and faithful God who has shown me once more that with Him all things are possible as He guided and protected me throughout the period of my study particularly at the data collection stage.

My special thanks go to my invaluable supervisor, Dr. (Mrs.) N.P. Ogbonnaya, for her readiness and motherly co-operation which was very inspirational to me. I thank her for all time given me while the study lasted. I am equally grateful to all the lecturers in the Department of Nursing Sciences for the part they played in the successful completion of my programme.

My family members for their co-operation

Lastly, I thank all the students of the department for their co-operation during the data collection.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated nursing studentsô perceptions and attitudes towards continuous assessment as means of academic evaluation in University of Nigeria, Enugu campus. The subjects for this study were all the 454 undergraduate nursing students of the Department of Nursing Sciences University of Nigeria, Enugu campus. Six research objectives and five hypotheses guided the study. Cross- sectional descriptive design was adopted for this study. A face and content validated structured questionnaire in 4 point Likert scale format with a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was used for data collection. Data were analysed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation and statistical test of relationship between variables was done using one-way analysis of variance, t-test and Chi-Square. Major findings revealed that all the nursing students (mean=3.19±0.29) have positive views about continuous assessment, majority (mean=3.11 ±0.29) have positive views on the various methods of continuous assessment. All the students (mean=3.21 ±0.34) have positive view of the benefits of continuous assessment, all the students (mean=2.9 ±0.52) encounter challenges in carrying out continuous assessment and all the students (mean=3.03 ±0.59) have positive attitudes towards continuous assessment. The result also revealed that more than one quarter of the students 123(28.3%) preferred objective test items as method of continuous assessment. The study also showed that studentsô view of continuous assessment has positive influence ($p < 0.05$) on their attitudes towards continuous assessment while the students class level have no influence ($p > 0.05$) on their perception of continuous assessment . There was also no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in the view of continuous assessment, between male and female students and no significant relationship ($p > 0.05$) in the preferred methods of continuous assessment between male and female students. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended among other things that C.A. of students should be extended to all the domains of learning, the library of schools should be well equipped and update on implementation of continuous assessment given to teachers to avoid bias assessment.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In every educational institution students at any level are bound to undergo one form of academic assessment or another. Educational assessment is vital in teaching and learning process as every educational system needs to measure the learnersô knowledge, skills and attributes against the predetermined standard in order to determine the extent to which the teaching learning objectives as specified in the curriculum have been achieved. According to Basavanthapa, (2003), educational assessment provides the necessary feedback required in order to maximize the end result of educational efforts of every student. Assessment of student performance also aims at providing supportive evidence necessary for the decision making on their educational performance. Academic evaluation is also a critical aspect of teaching learning process.

Educational evaluation or assessment is carried out in two major forms namely, formative or continuous assessment and summative assessment. Summative assessment entails assigning a grade for studentôs achievements at the end of a term, course or instructional programs. The old method of assessing students otherwise called summative assessment is quite different from the method of continuous assessment. The difference is based on some issues such as how a student who happens to fall ill and could not write the final examination would be graded. The short comings of summative evaluation breed problems such as examination malpractice, mental and physical exhaustion and embarrassment to both the student and examination bodies; as a result educational measurement experts and policy makers have come up with the concept of continuous assessment (Onuka, 2005).

Continuous assessment which is the focus of this study refers to the ongoing or systematic assessment of studentôs achievements while term courses or instructional programme is in progress. It is used to monitor learning progress during instruction and to provide continuous feedback to both students and teachers concerning learning successes and failures. The feedback to students reinforces successful learning and identifies the learning problems that need corrections. Feedback to the teacher provides information for modifying instruction. Continuous assessment is known to provide an enabling environment for both students and teachers to know how much the students have acquired in learning (Cronbach, 2000).

Continuous assessment also gingers students to read ahead of time, prepare in advance for their examinations to come and have a firmer grip in the understanding of their courses. Race, (2007) stressed that continuous assessment is more useful to the students, since it provides them with on-going feedback on their performance, helps them to become more self-critical, and encourages them to attempt to master materials as they actually work through a course or course unit rather than leaving the real learning process to the very end. It is also much fairer, in that it allows students to demonstrate their ability and development on an on-going basis, so that the student who works steadily and consistently well but is not very good at sitting for examination is not placed at a disadvantage compared with the lazy student who is skillful at the ñexamination gameò but otherwise not particularly competent.

The concept of continuous assessment is not new in education in developed countries where continuous assessment is in-built into the teaching and learning as posited by Izard, (2007).Moreover, previous studies on the subject have revealed that in the international scenarios, formative assessment had already been practiced in schools including Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland and Scotland (Adebowale &Alao, 2008). However, for several years, the educational systems of many African nations were dominated by the one-short summative type of assessment, (Alausa, 2005). The examination system, up to the time of the introduction of continuous assessment was also based purely on the single summative assessment (Fafunwa, 2004).Students were coached to pass examinations so as to move up the education ladder. It was to counter the problems of the single summative examination that suggestion for a broader approach to assessment, which will be flexible and also provide valid and reliable results were made.

Reineke, (2007) asserts that the aim of continuous assessment is no longer to improve test scores, but to find ways in which assessment impacts on the way teaching occurred and learners learnt, so as to contribute to improvement in the education system. According to Hanan (2009), this cannot happen without the right perception of continuous assessment by the students. In continuous assessment, comprehensive data are collected on studentsô performance in a systematic manner through the entire period of teaching and learning and in a variety of situations with purpose of awarding a mark that reflects the typical performance of the student over period of instruction (Quansah, 2004).Furthermore, continuous assessment provides cumulative records of the students, which can be used to extrapolate for a studentsô final examination-if need be in the event that the student falls sick during

examination time. Again it also spreads work throughout a course and so keeps them busy rather than wait till end of year or course examinations which makes students too examination conscious (Denga, 2004).

Based on this premise the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), (2004) through the National Policy on Education stated that educational assessment at all levels would be liberalized by basing them in whole or part on continuous assessment. This recommendation was based on some deficiencies identified in the nationôs way of assessing students. The traditional system of assessment concentrated only on the cognitive domain, with little or no attempt made to assess the affective and psychomotor domains. This system encourages students to study only during the period of examination. This is done by the memorization of facts, which are forgotten after the examination (FGN, 2004 & Obe, 2005). It was based on these reasons and more that the committee set for National Policy on Education in 1971, recommended the use of continuous assessment in Nigerian Educational System. In pursuance of this policy the National University Council (NUC) allotted 30% and 70% of the total score of the university students to continuous assessment and end of semester examination respectively. In consonance with the development, the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN) also proposed the use of continuous assessment in evaluating Nursing and Midwifery students. The training of Nursing and Midwifery students is the responsibility of nurse educators: therefore Okpala, (2006) recommends that nurse educators should adopt formative more than summative evaluation. This is because it encourages teachersô involvement and the development of good study habits in students; minimizes examination malpractice and ensures the development of cognitive and non-cognitive traits. It also improves instructional process and is more indicative of learnerôs overall ability over a period of time.

The change in learning theories, several instructional innovations and alternative assessment methods found their way into educational practice. But are these innovations as successful as they promise to be? Research findings suggest that studentsô perceptions of academic assessment have considerable influence on studentsô approaches to learning (Struyven, Dochy & Janesens, 2002).

In all these, it is believed that most students are not very much at home when it comes to assessing how much they have been able to assimilate from their lectures and so they may

have negative perception (Salsali, 2005). Moreover the attitudes of students towards continuous assessment may stem from their perception. Where their perception is negative their attitudes towards continuous assessment will not be commendable because they will not strive or pull their weight enough to achieve much from it, they may have non- challant attitudes towards continuous assessment. On the other hand where students perception of continuous assessment is positive, their attitudes may even cause them to go as far as having discussion group in other to excelle in their performance during continuous assessment, especially where they have a strong believe that their performance or scores in continuous assessment will go a long way to beef up their scores in the final result. Our perceptual and attitudinal frame of mind determines our scale of preferences and our choices. Studentsô perceived assessment requirements seem thus to have a strong influence on the approach to learning a student adopts when tackling an academic task (Struyven, Dochy, & Gielen, 2003). Therefore, since the overall achievement and placement of the students depends to a large extent on how well the student perform on continuous assessment, the researcher of this paper is prompted to investigate the perception and attitudes of students nurses toward continuous assessment as academic evaluation in University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus.

Statement of the Problem.

Sometimes it is difficult for parents, teachers, including the students themselves to predict beforehand what the final performance of the students may be (Osuji, 2006).According to work by Struyven et al (2002) on studentôs perceptions about assessment in higher education, it was reported that some students may believe that they are equal to the task of facing an examination on particular course successfully without realizing how unprepared they are. It is also difficult to predict how ready students are to face examination in their various courses without continuous assessment.

The researcher during her undergraduate studies observed that despite the importance of continuous assessment many students still do not take them seriously. Some of these students fail to do their assignments, or any tasks outside examinations, some would not even do the assignments while others would like others to write for them not minding quality of work that is done, some would copy a fellow studentsô work and submit. This made the researcher to wonder if the students have the right perception of continuous assessment and if the students have the right perception of the value of continuous assessment as part of their academic evaluation.

Griffiths, (2005) captures another area of disparity which relates to teacher involvement. He opines that the teachers in continuous assessment may not be fair because different teachers may understand their involvement differently. Disparity also exists in terms of how assessment are marked, some lecturers or institutions include marks allotted to class attendance or some other areas that they consider relevant while some do not and base their scores on actual scores earned from the continuous assessment. The foregoing leaves the researcher with some questions thus: How do the undergraduate nursing students view continuous assessment? What is their attitude towards continuous assessment? Do they understand the contributions of continuous assessment to their overall academic performance? And How do undergraduate nursing students see continuous assessment as part of academic evaluation?

The present study will try to answer these questions. There is dearth of knowledge regarding a study of this nature in the nursing literature in Nigeria. The findings of the present study will fill the gap in knowledge and serve as a baseline studies for further researches or interventions.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate undergraduate nursing studentsô perceptions and attitudes towards continuous assessment in academic evaluation.

Objectives of study

The specific objectives for the study are to:

1. Determine undergraduate nursesô perception about continuous assessment in academic evaluation.

2. Determine undergraduate nursesô perception of the methods/techniques used in continuous assessment.
3. Elicit undergraduate nursesôawareness of the benefits of continuous assessment.
4. Identify challenges faced by undergraduate student nurses in carrying out continuous assessment.
5. Determine undergraduate student nursesôattitudes towards continuous assessment.
6. Determine studentsôpreferred method of continuous assessment.

Hypothesis

1. There will be no significant relationship between the studentsô views of continuous assessment and their attitudes towards continuous assessment.
2. There will be no significant differences in the view/perceptions of continuous assessment among students in different class levels.
3. There will be no significant gender difference in the perception of continuous assessment.
4. There will be no significant difference in the attitudes towards continuous assessment between male and female students.
5. There will be no significant relationship in the preferred method of continuous assessment among male and female students.

Significance of the study

The findings of the present study will help to assess how nursing students understand, view and value continuous assessment as indispensable tool in evaluating their academic performance. The findings of this study will also reveal~~reveale~~ the studentsô views of the methods of continuous assessment, as well as their opinion concerning these various methods of continuous assessment used on them, as weaknesses of the methods may be identified and the result utilized for future planning of evaluation to improve learning.

The findings of the study will hopefully provide educators with an important source of information, namely; studentsô perception about continuous assessment and its influence on learning, which can be an important guide in their reflective search to improve their teaching and evaluation practices gearing towards achieving a higher quality of learning and education. Furthermore, the result of the study has provided practical suggestions on how to improve on continuous assessment as a tool for academic evaluation as it will help the teachers and administrators to judge the extent to which the objectives of the school have been achieved.

Undoubtedly the study findings will help teachers, curriculum planners and other educators to decide on their retention of the continuous assessment method of evaluating students or making appropriate changes. It is also hoped that findings of this study will expose other areas or aspects of continuous assessment that will require further research work thereby creating room for more improvement in this field of study.

Scope of the Study

This research work was delimited to undergraduate nursing student in the department of Nursing Sciences, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. The students as respondent included both the males and females in their various levels of the programme, excluding the first years that are yet to get a firm grip of the university education programme.

Operational Definition of Terms

Students' perceptions of continuous assessment: studentsô views, feelings and opinions about continuous assessment, their opinions on the, methods/techniques, benefit and challenges of continuous assessment.

Continuous Assessment: This has to do with finding out how much a student has been able to grasp in the teaching-learning process. In this study continuous assessment means monitoring of the student nursesôprogress in an on-going basis while the students are actually working their way through a course or major unit taking into cognizance all the domains of learning.

Attitudes towards continuous assessment: This refers to the way students feel or think about continuous assessment reflected on their behaviour towards continuous assessment which may be positive or negative.

Academic Evaluation: Academic evaluation in this study is based on determining the extent to which an objective is being attained, the effectiveness of the learning experience provided in the lecture room, and how well the goals of education have been accomplished based on learning from a lot of academic and studying of books rather than on practical or technical experience.

Nursing students: They are a set of people in the university environment who are undergoing a BNSC programme in the department of Nursing Sciences University of Nigeria. They include registered nurses with diploma certificate who are undergoing their B.Sc Nursing and the Generic Nursing students.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter deals with the review of relevant literatures as it relates to studentsô nurses perceptions and attitudes towards continuous assessment as academic evaluation. The conceptual review was on the concept of concept of academic evaluation, concept of continuous assessment concept of perception and attitudes. The chapter also discussed the methods, advantages and disadvantages of continuous assessment as well as continuous assessment in Nursing Education in Nigeria, theoretical review-Ivan Pavlov Theory of Classical Conditioning, empirical review of literature relating to the topic as well as analysis of the reviewed literature.

Conceptual review

Concept of academic evaluation

In our daily lives, we are continually evaluating objects, people, and ideas in our immediate environments. We pass judgments in conversation, while reading, while shopping, while eating, and while watching television or movies, often being unaware that we are doing so. Evaluation according to Gbamanja, (2002), is a process by which we find out how far the learning experiences as developed and organized, are actually producing the desired results. Every institution of learning has set goals that have been set to be achieved in the learner and evaluation is the only means of knowing if these goals and expectations are achieved.

Basavanthapa, (2003) defined evaluation as the process of judging the effectiveness of educational experience through careful appraisal. It is any systematic, continuous process of determining the extent to which specific educational objectives, previously identified and defined are attained. Basavanthappa,(2003) went on to say that as an essential part of teaching, learning process, evaluation in education is the process of judging the effectiveness of educational experiences through careful appraisal, although it involves measurement, it is different; measurement is appraisal in terms of a fixed standard whereas evaluation involves a continuous process of collecting, recording, assembling and interpreting information. Educational evaluation is made in relation to the objectives that have been determined previously by faculty, individual, teachers and students, he added. It is a much broader concept than marking and giving a grade at the end of a course. It is a process by which those concerned with goals, processes and programs may collect, make judgment and review as necessary.

According to Salsali, (2005), evaluation is the act of considering or examining something in order to judge its value, quality, importance, extent or condition. The ñsomethingôô here to be examined or judged includes: total school programme, curricular procedure and individual or group of individuals. Ifamuyiwa, (2006) also defined evaluation as a process of gathering valuable information on attainment of educational objectives, analyzing and fashioning information to aid judgment on the effectiveness of teaching or an educational programme. He went further to say that evaluation is the process, whose duty is the systematic and objective determination of merit, worth, or value. Without such a process there is no way to distinguish the worthwhile from worthless. This process involves two dimensions: (a) Gathering data and (b) using the data for judgment and decision-making with respect to agreed standards.

Evaluation in an educational setting is the process whereby we seek evidence that the learning experiences we have designed for students are effective; we evaluate educational activities for two overlapping reasons: to obtain information that can inform the ongoing design and development process (often referred to as formative evaluation) and to decide whether an innovation is worth retaining (often referred to as summative evaluation). These forms of evaluation often melt together, and each can be difficult to undertake properly alone effectively. (Olatoye, 2006).

Furthermore Ugodulunwa, (2008), sees evaluation as the process of making value judgment about the worth of a thing. It includes obtaining information for use in judging the worth of a programme, product, procedure or objective in educational activity. This means that in evaluating any programme information about it has to be gathered which will help to determine how effective the programme is.

Evaluation of learners in summary is the process of making a judgment about the quality of a learnerôs performance using the information gathered during the studentôs period of training. It can simply be referred to as the process of gathering valid information on attainment of educational objectives, analyzing and fashioning the information for the purpose of making value judgment on the effectiveness of teaching and learning or an educational programme.

From the above definitions, evaluation has been identified as being: Systemic, which means evaluation is not haphazard but based on definite or popular criteria, procedure and plan, evaluation is a process, which means it is ongoing, a means to an end whereby lessons are

drawn from experiences to serve as basis for decision making and not an end in itself and evaluation is also said to provide valid information-the information so gathered should measure what it purports to measure. Finally evaluation is Judgment-worth or value is considered in relation to; relevance and adequacy of educational objective, appropriateness of content, and suitability of instructional methods, materials, activities and evaluation instruments (Osuji, 2006).

Purposes of evaluation in nursing education

According to Gbamanja, (2002), evaluation in nursing is done to determine the effectiveness of educational programmes and specific courses, and also assist in providing a basis for improving them. We are liable to see the merits and demerits and differences in the programme and thus, know the aspects to improve upon.

Gbamanja, went further to say that evaluation also helps us in nursing to clarify our objectives. If certain objectives in the curriculum are not done or yield good results, they could be modified, clarified or even deleted for better planned objectives that are liable to yield better results.

He went on to say that evaluation provide school marks or grades. School marks or grades are the result of formal tests, examinations, assignments. Laboratory reports or observational data which teachers are supposed to record from time to time. Educational systems normally require such records and lecturers must always make them available either to the students, their parents or school authorities .Through evaluation parents are informed about how their children are progressing not only academically but morally,

According to Orgu, 2010 evaluation in nursing is done in order to promote students to higher classes. Students should be allowed to progress to higher levels as they complete work at one stage in school when they perform well in their academic evaluation. He also said that evaluation helps to motivate students. Students can have great encouragements as they succeed in examinations and tests as well as in sports and other co-curricular activities. Alternatively, if a student sees that he/she has failed a test or done badly in a particular test, there is the possibility for the student to work harder so as to improve on the past failure.

Evaluation is also used for guidance and counseling purposes. Academic success or failure is sometimes responsible for the kind of emotions students may display. Successful students

tend to enjoy school more than those who are not successful. Generally those students who appear to be failures may exhibit some emotional instability and it is these students that will normally need more guidance and counseling.

Evaluation in nursing also helps to assess the effectiveness of the teaching strategy and thus, makes the teachers grow professionally.

According to Orgu, evaluation is used for university or college entrance. Higher institutions do not just accept students, students and candidates must pass certain assessment and measurement processes and must show evidence of good character in many cases. Information on these is recorded by means of appropriate evaluation methods.

Types of Evaluation

Duncan, (2007), categorized evaluation into baseline, formative, diagnostic and summative evaluation. While Cronbach, (2000) categorized evaluation in relation to their role in teaching in the following manner; placement evaluation, formative, diagnostic and summative evaluation.

Baseline (placement) Evaluation.

This type of evaluation is usually based on the studentôs previous knowledge, attitude, and skills (base line data) that may have direct or indirect bearing on learning. It is concerned with the entry behavior of the student. Baseline evaluation is usually used at the beginning of a phase, grade or learning experience to establish what learners already know, what they can do, or what they value. For learners with disabilities, baseline assessment can be done also. This type of evaluation is done to prepare the studentôs mind for tasks ahead and stimulate the studentôs interest. This type of evaluation is very important because one cannot expect much from a poorly equipped student. It also helps us weed out unqualified and untrained students at the early stage of the training.

Formative Evaluation.

Formative Evaluation is developmental. It takes place during the course of training to monitor learning progress. It is ongoing, guiding and assisting programme. Its purpose is to provide continuous feedback to both the students and teachers concerning learning successes and failures. Feed back to students provide reinforcement of successful learning and identifies the specific learning errors that need correction. Feedback to the teacher provides information for modifying instruction and for prescribing group and individual remedial work. Formative

evaluation depends heavily on specially prepared tests. They are usually mastery tests that provide direct measure of all the intended learning outcome of the segments. Tests used for formative evaluation are mostly frequently teacher made but customized test.

Diagnostic Evaluation.

Diagnostic evaluation is a specific type of formative evaluation. It may lead to some form of intervention, or remedial action, or revision programme. It can help to identify strengths and weaknesses of a learner, or of a teaching methodology, or barriers to learning. The results can help to plan individual support for learners who have problems. The primary aim of diagnostic evaluation is to determine the courses of learning problems and to formulate a plan for remedial action.

Summative Evaluation.

Summative Evaluation typically comes at the end of the course of instruction to determine the studentôs actual level of competence which is compared with the expected competence. It gives an overall picture of the achievements of a learner at a given time, for example, at the end of a term or year. Summative evaluation is like a ñsnapshotò of a learnerôs progress at a particular point in time (and formative evaluation is like a ñvideoò of a learnerôs progress during the process). Summative evaluation is referred to as ñevaluation of learningò.

The concept of continuous assessment

Continuous assessment is the educational policy in which students are examined continuously over most of the duration of their education, the result of which are taken into account after leaving school, is often proposed or used as an alternative to a final examination system .The students are assessed at regular intervals using different methods as the programme is going on and not just at the end of session or course. The result of the various assessments can be referred to even when the student has graduated and is looking for a job by the intending employers.

Continuous assessment according to Osuji, (2006), can also be seen as a systematic and objective process of determining the extent of a studentôs performance in all the expected changes in his behaviour from the day he enters a course of study in a continuous and progressive pattern to the end of such a course of study. It is the best and fairest way to assess studentsô performance, assessing each stage of a course as soon it started and after it has been

completed as soon as possible on in some cases while the work is being carried out. It is much useful to students, since it provides them with ongoing feedback on their performances, helps them to become more self critical and encourages them to attempt to master materials as they actually work through a course. It makes them to form good study habits (Adekola, 2004) According to William, (2007); continuous assessment enables students to act on the current future learning outcomes.

Mazibuko and Gininda (2005), describe continuous assessment as a formative evaluation measure conducted during the teaching and learning process with the aim of influencing and informing the overall instructional process. They further claim that continuous assessment is the assessment of the whole learner on an ongoing basis over a period of time, where Cumulative analysis of the learnersô abilities in specific areas are made in order to facilitate further positive learning. They also believe that continuous assessment allows early identification of problems in teaching and in the learning process and offer opportunity to assist leanness before their problems worsens.

The term óformative assessmentô is used to describe assessment that is directed at giving information, while working on and after completing an assignment, that is explicitly directed at supporting, guiding and monitoring the studentôs learning process (Dochy, 2001). Continuous Assessment as defined by Shehu, (2005), is a mechanism whereby the final grading of students in the cognitive, affective and psycho motor domains of learning systematically takes account of all their performance during a given period of schooling. Assessment in the cognitive domain is associated with the process of knowledge and understanding .The affective domain applies to features such as attitudes, motives, interest and other personal trails. Assessment in the psycho motive domain involves assessing the learnersô ability in terms of dexterity (e.g. in hand writing, construction and projects).

From these definitions one could deduce that continuous assessment is an assessment approach which involves the use of a variety of instrument, assesses various components of learning, assesses behavior, personal development and values, presents opportunities to identify problems during the teaching and learning process, provides assistance to the learners and also provide feedback to all stake holders which include learners, teachers and parents on how learners are progressing.

History of Continuous Assessment

The importance of and preference for evaluating learning outcomes, using a wide variety of instruments and containing data from a wide variety of sources, rather than the use of one-shot and one-type examinations, have long been recognized worldwide; hence the Federal Government of Nigeria mandated, the use of evaluations of this nature, referred to as continuous assessment, in Nigerian Schools. The introduction of continuous assessment in our school system is regarded as one of the most significant innovations of the National Policy on Education. It has been used as a testing modality in many school systems adopted in many developing countries. It is the correct assessment strategy for the educational evaluation of studentsô achievement in teaching-learning situations in the Nigerian school system. It is also used for the evaluation of the educational system itself (Osuji and Okonkwo, 2006).

When the Nigeria Curriculum Conference was held in the year 1969, it was suggested that continuous assessment be introduced as a remedy to the undesirable effect of the one-shot examination of students learning and achievement. It was not until 1977 that a bold attempt was made to adopt it as a policy to guide evaluation strategy of students learning and achievement. It is now entrenched in the National Policy on Education 1977, revised in 1981 and 2004. The National Policy on Education (NPE), paragraph 7, section 7.14 states in clear terms that ñEducational assessment and evaluation will be liberalized by basing them in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual.ò The policy has gone further to make elaborations of the Continuous Assessment (CA) for the various levels and cycles of our educational system.

The National Policy of Education is advocating for continuous assessment in primary education, while advocating for continuous assessment+ final examination from junior secondary to higher education in all institutions of learning with particular reference to 6-3-3- 4 OR 9-3- 4system of education (NPE, 2004) .

The continuous assessment in all constitutes 40% or 30% of the total marks (depending on educational level) except for primary education where continuous assessment constitutes a total of hundred marks, in some schools this 30%or 40% is divided into three grade assessment, others prefer two graded tests. Attendance, at times constitutes part of this

grading in some schools. Teachers are actually the ones that have the final say when it comes to the mark or score of the students of their subjects.

Characteristics of Continuous Assessment

According to Osuji, (2006) continuous assessment is said to be systematic, Comprehensive, Cumulative and Guidance-Oriented.

The Systematic Nature of Continuous Assessment: Continuous assessment is said to be systematic because it has a definitive programme of assessment. Thus it has an operational plan which indicates or specifies what measurements are to be made of the studentsô performance, the time intervals when such measurements are to be made, the results to be recorded and the specific nature of the instruments or strategies to be adopted for the measurement. Usually, these are worked out in advance. It means then that any school involved in continuous assessment programme must have to adopt a definite programme that should be made known to all participants especially students, teachers and even the ministry of education officials and parents who are directly involved.

The Comprehensive Nature of Continuous Assessment: A variety of instruments or assessment procedures are used in ascertaining the performance of the pupils. Such instruments include tests/examinations, assignments, projects, observations, questionnaires, interviews, socio-metric techniques etc. In so far as continuous assessment looks at the total development of the pupil, it is said to be comprehensive. The cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviours and domains are all considered and assessed. You have to note that the evaluation system before the introduction of continuous assessment system focused mainly on the cognitive domain of behaviour. Psychomotor and affective domains of behaviour were excluded.

The Cumulative Nature of Continuous Assessment: The specification is that there should be repeated measurement and all such measurements are taken into account in presenting a picture of a student at any point in time. It means therefore that any decisions to be made on any student at any time should also consider and take into account all previous decisions about the pupil. This implies that the final grade of any child at the end of the year or period of schooling must incorporate or integrate the data of the last assessment including in some degree all the assessment data throughout the school year or period of schooling. In the past decisions on a student were based solely on a single examination.

The Guidance-Oriented Nature of Continuous Assessment: Every information collected on the students during the process of continuous assessment is made use of for further development of the student. A major reason why students are assessed within a course of study rather than waiting until the end of the school term or school year or even end of the programme, is to obtain information on the level of the studentsô achievement and then use such information, if need be, to assist the students in good time before it becomes too late. One of the main values of assessment in education is that it can assist to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in studentsô performances, the teacherôs instructional strategies and the educational programme. The information obtained can be utilized as a sound basis for encouraging the studentsô efforts, for remediation of studentsô learning problems and necessary improvement of strategies and modalities of instruction.

Purposes of Continuous Assessment

Koffi, (2005) stated that the addition of continuous assessment in the instructional and testing process is intended to achieve two major purposes: to improve both the validity and reliability of the results of pupilsô performance on tests and exercises, and secondly to help the pupil to develop effective learning and work habits. According to him, the present continuous assessment system is essentially based on frequent test taking and does not really serve the two critical purposes of continuous assessment. Classroom tests are based on assessment of lower level abilities and memorization. Where assessments are based on low level thinking skills i.e., ñKnowledgeò and ñComprehensionò, students complete their education still unable to analyze and apply their knowledge to solve problems. Education, in effect is unable to transform the learner from the stage of ñknowledge recipientò to the status of ñknowledge producer and problem solverò. The central purpose of continuous assessment is to help the student to become a better learner and producer by encouraging students to improve their knowledge and skills through learning, test taking and project undertaking in the critical and important objectives of the school curriculum.

The purposes of continuous assessment are achieved in the following ways according to Ezewu & Okoye, (2002):

Through Longer time for collecting assessment information

To obtain accurate and reliable assessment data on a student, the assessments could be spread over a longer time, allowing the student to take tests and other assignments at different times

throughout the course. The average of the scores for the various assessments is a more reliable indicator of the studentôs performance in the subject than the score the student obtains in a one-shot examination.

Through use of different test forms and different test situations.

By extending the time span for collecting assessment information throughout the duration of a course, different forms of testing and different assessment situations including acquisition and demonstration of practical skills can be introduced in the continuous assessment process. Practical skills such as the skills and competencies involved in conducting interviews, writing and presenting reports, presenting and analyzing data in graphical forms, and production of three-dimensional objects in a variety of subjects could be encouraged in schools to provide a more comprehensive and more valid assessment of studentôs ability.

Inclusion of more complex thinking skills in the testing programme.

By extending the period for collecting assessment data, forms of knowledge and competencies that cannot be easily assessed under strictly timed conditions can also be assessed. High level thinking skills involving analytical thinking and problem solving skills and other competencies that require extended time for learning and for test response can then be added to the continuous assessment programme. The addition has the effect of helping students to acquire the habit of using high level thinking skills in a variety of situations rather than using pure memorization and other low level thinking processes.

Teacher assistance and remediation.

A further purpose of the continuous assessment process is to foster cooperation between the student and lecturer especially in the area of studentsô class projects. The process requires the teacher to provide assistance in the form of advice on various aspects of studentsô projects. The student learns to consult the lecturer, classmates and other sources on aspects of his/her project work, while maintaining his/her position as the leader in the project undertaking. This is the normal work procedure in the adult world where production is essentially based on cooperation and not on timed test situations. Besides offering assistance as needed, the lecturer is able to offer remedial help by using studentsô common mistakes and misunderstandings for further improvement in class learning.

Methods / Techniques of Continuous Assessment.

Continuous assessment can take large number of ways according to Onuka, (2005) which includes observation, tests/quizzes, performance tasks and project, portfolios, exhibitions, peer assessment class discussions and class attendance.

Observations

Observation entails the teacher carefully taking note of the studentsô reactions and contributions in everyday school setting. The teacher carefully observes and records student behaviour for example during oral reading, discussions, seminar, field-trips, independent studies, projects or group work. The recordings are preferably made during instruction or as soon after as possible (Oguneye, 2002).

According to Adeyema, (2008), variety of tools and techniques has been developed for managing the collection and documentation of observations, among these are: teacher protocols, anecdotal records, check list and rating forms.

Teacher protocols: a diary or a logbook in which the teacher assembles observations, care is taken to record regularly and to collect notes on all students.

An anecdotal record: Adeyema, (2008) went on to describe an anecdotal record as an accurate description of meaningful actual class room events and incidents, written down shortly after the event has occurred. In the light of everyday constraints this approach is best for observation in areas that are difficult to assess by other means and the teacher can limit their observations to a few types of behaviours. Examples of some behaviours well suited for the use of anecdotal records; How does the student approach a problem? How persistence in carrying out a task? How willing to listen to the ideas of others? What contributions are made to a class activity?

Check list and rating forms: also called rating scales, are forms used to make observations more systematic and easier to manage. A check list is a form used to mark the presence or absence of a particular behaviour (Norman & Gronlund, 2010).

Example of a check list form

Student	Time of observation	On task	Off task	Notes

In the above check list form, the teacher records any behavior he observes on a particular student e.g. how attentive is a student, he student name is written in the column for student, time of observation of the behavior, on the on task column, the teacher records if the student is attentive during a task like during teaching or not.

Rating forms are similar to check list but demand observer evaluation. Rating forms can be used to rate procedures and production but are most commonly used to assess personal and social development, such as commitment, interest, conduct and cooperation.

Example of a Rating form for analysis and assessment of class discussion.

	Name	**Analysis**	**Most often**	**Seldom**	**Rarely or never**
1. Explain well					
2. Keeps to the point					
3. Listen to others					
4. Takes an actual part					
5. Asks good questions					
6. provides support for others					
7. Provides arguments					
8. Seeks conclusions					

The above is a rating form which the teacher uses to assess a particular student during a class discussion as a method of continuous assessment. the teacher writes the studentôs name and scores the student during the class discussion based on the given behavior on the form e.g does the student explain points well, the teacher says if the student does that most often, seldom, rarely or never, by the time the student is scored on the other behaviours as contained in the form, an assessment is made on the student which forms part of the student continuous assessment.

Tests

Ukwuje, (2012) sees test as instrument for determining the degree of change that has occurred among students at the end of instruction.

Test is the major and most commonly used instrument for continuous assessment. It is defined as a sample of studentsô performance on items that have been designed to measure pre-selected objectives. In other words, it is a set of questions which students are expected to answer. The responses of the students to the questions give a measure of their level of performance or achievement. Test items are usually based on topics or sub-topics within a subject. These are directed to measure your pupilsô level of attainment of pre-specified objectives. It means that the test and the performances they require are related to measure the objectives you want them to measure. It is important therefore that you always state your objectives using action verbs only. This will help you determine the test items you need to construct to measure studentsômastery of those things you intent for pupils to master.

Tests of different types can form a part of continuous assessment. They can be response tests (direct questions, multiple choice, true / false, matching and fill-in forms to assess knowledge, essay tests to assess understanding, reasoning and writing skills, oral tests also to assess understanding, reasoning skills and oral fluency and manual skill tests.

For the classroom use, there are two broad types of test items used, essay type items and objective type items.

Essay Test Items

As a classroom teacher, you must be familiar with the essay test items. They are the item types commonly used in the school system because of the ease of construction among other considerations. According to Okpala, (2006) an essay item is that which allows students to select, organize, and integrate and synthesis their answers or responses in order to present them in their own styles and their own words. An essay item could be extended or restricted, depending on the amount of freedom given to the student to organize his ideas or ideas or facts in order to present his answer, e.g.

(a) Extended type:

i. Describe the construction of a histogram

ii. Explain the applications of the helix

(b) Restricted type:-

i. Give 3 advantages of essay test

ii. List 4 sources of research problems

iii. Mention 5 parts of a circle

The nature of essay items makes marking or scoring to be subjective. Again, because, it is very easy to set, some teachers set essay items that are not good. These tend to affect the reliability and validity of the essay items. Therefore, you should give much care and attention to the construction and scoring of essay tests. You have to follow the guidelines given.

Objective Test Items: Objective test items are regarded as highly structured test items to which the students are expected to supply the answers. These could be a word or two, symbol or formula, numbers or figures or select the correct answer from a limited number of alternatives or choices. This means that objectives test items can be classified into supply items and selection types. Each of these can be further sub-divided

Supply Types: This type can be sub-divided into two, short answer items and completion items.

Selection Types: There are three common types in this category, alternative response type, matching type and multiple choice items

Performance tasks and projects

Performance tasks are assignments or tests demanding the application of knowledge and skill to particular problems. The tasks require students, to structure the assessment task, apply information, construct responses and in many cases explain the process by which they arrived at the answers. The teacher observes the performance of the student or uses other means such as interviews, questionnaires, reports, student self-evaluation, peer evaluation or guest evaluation to obtain information about proceeding. It could be individual or group assignment. Effort is put in making performance tasks interesting and challenging e.g. is asking students to write a lesson plan for a topic after teaching them on writing a lesson plan.

Portfolios

The portfolio is a collection of items from a student that are chosen to reflect learning in a particular area. These can range from early draft to final products. The portfolio has a multi-purpose role but in essence it is meant to provide rich evidence and a good overview of learning and progress in a particular subject, field of study or development of skills. Examples of some possible items collected and organized are notes, memos, outlines, sketches, brain-storming lists, graphs drawings, photographs, tables, flow charts, audio and

video tapes, discussion points, reports, collaborative write ups, models, teacher feedback comments.

Portfolio Assessment

The overall goal of the preparation of a portfolio is for the learner to demonstrate and provide evidence that he or she has mastered a given set of learning objectives. Portfolios are more than thick folders containing student work. They are personalized, longitudinal representations of a student's own efforts and achievements, in which the integration of numerous facts to form broad and encompassing concepts is actively performed by the student instead of the instructor (Janssens, Boes & Wante 2002). Additionally, portfolios have an important impact in driving student learning and they have the ability to measure outcomes such as professionalism that are difficult to assess using traditional methods (Friedman &Birenbaum, 2001).

Janssens et al. (2002) found that overall, students like this alternative procedure for assessment. Portfolio assessment seems to remove the students' perceived level of 'test anxiety'. This reduction shows up in the way students attend to class discussions, relieved of their traditional vigorous note- taking duties. Students thought that they would remember what they were learning much better and longer than they would the material for other classes they took, because they had internalized the material while working with it, thought about the principles, and applied concepts creatively and extensively over the duration of the course. The most negative aspect of creating portfolios is that they spend a lot of time going over the textbook or required readings. Students report that they are enjoying time spent on creating portfolios and that they believe it helps them learn concepts (Friedman &Birenbaum, 2001).

Janssens et al, (2002) investigated student teachers' perceptions of portfolios as an instrument for professional development, assessment and evaluation. The student teachers felt portfolios stimulated them to reflect and demonstrated their professional development as prospective teachers. They felt engaged in the portfolio- creating- process, but portfolio construction in itself was not sufficient. Students thought that supervision, in addition, was desirable and necessary. They saw portfolios as an instrument for professional development and personal growth, but advantages were especially seen in relation to evaluation. When students did not get grades for their portfolios, much lesser efforts were made to construct the portfolio. Although portfolios are an important source of personal pride, students thought portfolios were very time- consuming and expensive. Portfolios appear very useful in learning environments in which instruction and evaluation form integrated parts (Janssens, et al.

2002). A critical comment is given by Challis, (2001) who argues that portfolio assessment simply needs to be seen in terms that recognize its own strengths and its differences from other methods, rather than as a replacement of any other assessment methods and procedures.

The purpose of portfolios

- It provides evidence for teachers to assess learning.
- It facilitates teachers present communications
- It provides documentation for evaluating learning in a particular area.

It creates possibilities for students to become active participants in their assessment process. According to Moll, (2002) assessment of learning is interwoven with teaching and occurs through educatorsô observation of learners, teacher observation of learners at work, and through learnerôs exhibition and portfolios.

Exhibitions / Demonstrations

This is a situation whereby students display their work on demonstration what has been taught. Exhibition may include selected art facts, pictures, models, posters, power point presentation. The exhibition can be followed by a question and answer session and a review period, self, peers, teacher and guest-review. An example of this type of formative evaluation in nursing is the micro teaching that is done during the training period for nurse educators.

Peer Assessment

In some situations students are expected to review and critique each otherôs contributions. They take part in assessing presentations, oral reports, projects, portfolios and demonstrations. The main purpose is to help students become constructive reviewers and critics, who can present criticism in a supportive manner, as well as helping them to accept criticism from others. Peer assessment can take on various forms. Students are called on to discuss each otherôs work for example in critiquing sessions or seminars or presentations. Sometimes use is made of check lists and rating forms. Sometimes feedback is put forth in reflective writing. This can be done individually, in pairs or in groups. Segers and Dochy (2001) gathered quantitative and qualitative data from a research project which focused on different quality aspects of two new assessment forms in problem- based learning: peer assessment and the Overall test. In the peer assessment case at Louvain, the pearson correlation values indicated that peer and tutor scores are significantly interrelated. The

student self- scores are, to a minor extent, related to peer and tutor scores. These findings suggest that students especially experience difficulties in assessing themselves. Students' perceptions reveal that, on one hand, they are positive about self- and peer assessment as stimulating deep- level thinking and learning, critical thinking, and structuring the learning process in the tutorial group. On the other hand, the students have mixed feelings about being capable of assessing each other in a fair way. Most of them do not feel comfortable in doing so (Segers & Dochy, 2001).

Class Discussions

Discussions are organized by the teacher and students where by a particular topic or issue is discussed and while that is going on the teacher evaluates each studentôs contribution. An observer or external teacher can be invited to participate in the discussion and evaluation.

Importance of Continuous Assessment in Education System

Assessment is important in education, according to Eiman, (2010), because it provides information about learning that can be used to: Diagnose learnerôs strengths and needs, providing feedback on teaching and learning, providing a bases for instructional placement, informing and guiding instruction, communicating learning expectations, motivating and focusing learner attention and effort, providing basis for learner evaluation e.g. grading, proper evaluation of the curriculum and encourages teacher participation.

1. Diagnosing learner's strengths and needs: Through continuous assessment teachers are able to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student. The periodic and systematic method of assessing and evaluating a personôs attributes makes it possible for the teacher to have information collected on continuous behaviours of the students which will help them to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of students. In addition to providing a comprehensive picture of each student over a period of time, such information will help in educational and vocational placement of students.

Continuous assessment also looks at the studentôs overall capabilities-each assignment has original content and is graded by an expert in the field. This meant that you constantly demonstrate your levels of knowledge and this is something that an exam alone simply cannot accomplish. Each discussion post reply is also read and graded. This provides a very rich and accurate view of the level of the student.

2. Providing feedback on teaching and learning: Continuous assessment provides feedback to students and teachers on how far learning has taken place. Such feedback provides

information which is used for purposes of improving on the studentôs performance or modifying the content, context and methods of teaching, as well as in making a variety of other decisions. In continuous assessment teachers administer assessments in a variety of ways over time to allow them to observe multiple tasks and to collect information about what students know, understand and can do.

3. **Providing a basis for instructional placement:** Continuous assessment is planned and graded to suit the studentôs need at each level or period, so though the result the student makes, the teacher would be able to know when a student is ready for a higher placement. Thus the results of continuous assessment help to ensure that all the students make learning progress throughout the school cycle thereby increasing their academic achievement

4. **Informing and guiding instruction:** One of the expected advantages of continuous assessment lies in its being guidance oriented. Since it will involve data gathering over a long period of time, it will yield more accurate data, reaching the teacher early enough to modify instruction. This could play a vital role in diagnosing and remediating areas of learnersô weaknesses if properly anchored in what occurs in classrooms. Continuous assessment is an approach that would capture the full range of learnersô performance. Teachers and administrators would thus be able to assess learnersô progress and would have time to correct the problems.

5. Communicating learning expectations: When continuous assessments are done properly they should predict performance on the end-of-year examinations. The continuous assessment summative grade should be a good indicator to the learner, to his/her parents, teachers and school administrators of the learnerôs final examination marks unless extra effort is made by the learner towards the end of year examination.

6. Motivating and focusing learner attention and effort: Continuous assessment ensures a more frequent interaction between students and teachers where by the teacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of their learners. These exchanges foster a student teacher relationship based on individual interactions. Students learn that the teacher values their achievement and that their assessment outcomes have an impact on the instruction that they receive. One-to-one communication between the teacher and the student can motivate students to continue attending school and to work hard to achieve higher levels of mastery.

7. **Providing basis for learner evaluation.** Comprehensiveness of continuous assessment makes it possible that student assessment are not focused on academic skills alone, it embraces the cognitive, the psychomotor and the affective domains. A student is assessed as a total entity using all the psychometric devices, such as test and non test techniques. Also

since continuous assessment is cumulative all information gathered on the individual has to be pooled together before a decision can be taken. The information collected is to be used for educational, vocational and personal social decision-making for the student.

8. Proper evaluation of the curriculum: In continuous assessment, teachers assess the curriculum as implemented in the classroom. It also allows teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching strategies relative to the curriculum, and to change those strategies as directed by the needs of their students.

9. Encourages teacher participation: Another advantage of continuous assessment is that it places teachers at the centre of all performance-assessment activities. It encourages more teacher participation in the overall assessment or grading of his/her learners. Teachers must be given opportunities to select and review assessments so that they become involved and knowledgeable in the process. Through this approach, teachers would be able to integrate assessment and assessment results into instructional practice. Teachers would be expected to incorporate assessment into the larger learning frame work and possibly to provide evidence regarding how assessment information is used to inform and guide instruction for individual learners. With continuous assessment teachers must embed the assessment in their instructions, score the assessments and discuss standards for good learnersô work with colleagues, parents and learners.

The National Policy on Education gave the following factors that appear important for continuous assessment:

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching process. It is therefore reasonable that the teacher should be involved in the final assessment of the learners. Assessment that is done at the end of a particular level of education is done through a single examination set up by an external body, this form of assessment tends to deny the teacher the opportunity to participate in final assessment of his or her student.

An assessment procedure which takes into account the learners performance throughout the entire period of schooling is likely to be valid and more indicators of the learnersô over all ability than a single examination.

A teacher also needs to assess her own instructional methods from time to time in order to improve his or her performance. Data from continuous assessment can be useful to the teacher for such self assessment.

For several years, Nigeria and indeed most West African countries have been plagued with the occurrence of examination leakages and other malpractices especially in West African School Certificate Examinations

It has been suggested that one reason for such a high incidence of examination malpractice is the fact the single final examination is so crucial in deciding the future of the candidate that the temptation to ensure success by all means (fair or foul) is very high. It is believed that if continuous assessment is employed, this temptation would be considerably reduced. In order to evaluate the new educational system, one policy that cuts across all educational levels throughout Nigeria is that on continuous assessment.

Peter, 2011, also went on to say that the benefits of continuous assessment includes;

1. Continuous assessment will afford student to readily see his or her developmental pattern through the data. A student is able to know how he is progressing in his course work and would know which area to work harder on for him or her to make a good result after the course.
2. Through continuous assessment of the learners progress there is a mechanism whereby the final grading of learners in the cognitive affective and psychomotor domains of learning systematically takes account of all their performance during a given period. Continuous assessment involves the use of a variety of assessment instruments, assessing various components of learning, not only the thinking processes but including behaviours, personality traits and dexterity. Continuous assessment because it also takes place over a long period of time will be more holistic, representing the learner in his/her entirety.

One great advantage of formative assessment for learning according to Alausa, 2005 is that it is ongoing. This allows for incremental feedback to identify problems at their earliest stages. For example, a student can correct conceptual errors before undertaking work on a term paper. As that student works on the term paper, input from the teacher can inform, guide and validate each step of the writing process. Honesty or Cheating and plagiarism remain significant problems in academic settings. A study on academic dishonesty published in the Electronic Journal of Sociology in 2003 found that 83 percent of the students surveyed admitted to cheating more than once. Compared to graded summative assessments like final exams, ungraded formative assessments reduce the temptation to cheat. This allows students to focus on learning instead of grades.

Disadvantages of Continuous Assessment

1. It is more costly to maintain than summative assessment.
2. It consumes a lot of time
3. Students undergoing continuous assessment may feel they are under surveillance, and that every error that they make can count against them giving rise to different types of stress than during terminal examinations. Rowstree, (2003) stated that students now have users as well as nervous break down (creates tension in students).
4. There is danger of students being over assessed if not carefully planned and coordinated especially when several lecturers are asking simultaneously for assignments to be handed in.
5. Attempts to broaden the scope of the course maybe frustrated as students gear their study solely to the requirements of the assessment procedures especially test.
6. Students suffer from unequal availability of resources especially now that they carry out much of their work on personal computers or at a distance.
7. It requires much planning and consumes a lot of time.
8. Tutors need to have a high level of experience to enable them to make creative and effective use of continuous assessment.
9. Labor Intensive: Although offering many benefits, effective formative assessment can be difficult to achieve at scale. It may be logistically impossible to provide detailed descriptive feedback for each student in a large class. Even with a smaller number of students to deal with, formative assessment is time-consuming as it requires significant, ongoing dedication and effort from the teacher to sustain. This is especially true when combined with the summative assessments teachers are required to complete (Alausa, 2005)
10. Accountability to the laid down accountability chain in educationð student to teacher, teacher to school, school to district, etc. creates systemic pressure for student performance to be objectively and comparatively measurable at each level. Formative assessment, by definition, doesn't easily provide that kind of accountability. This explains why, although the advantages of formative assessment have been repeatedly articulated since the distinction between it and summative assessment was first made in 1967, empirical studies continue to show that very few teachers consistently make use of it in actual practice (Denga, 2004).

Concept of Perception

Perception is the outcome of a process of interpreting our sensations on the basis of past experiences (Eyo & Obikegunna, 2004); it generally refers to psychological processes whereby meaning, past experience or memory and judgment are involved. Eyo and Obikegunna, (2004) went on to say that perception is the recognition of things using your senses, especially the sense of sight, the way that you think about something or the impression you have of it. Our perception serves as basis on which we establish knowledge about the world, the emphasis is on how things appear rather than how things are, and i.e. the objective reality is useful in determining whether our perception is correct or illusory (wrongly reflects the objective situation). Again perception according to Salsali, (2005) is views or opinions held by an individual regarding a phenomena resulting from experience and external factors acting on the individual. Furthermore perception from psychological point of view is the conscious recognition and interpretation of sensory stimuli that serves as a basis for understanding, learning and knowing or for motivating a particular action or reaction (Mosby, 2009). In Psychology perception also applies to evaluation of oneôs own and others internal states and beliefs as well as sensory stimuli. Evolutional psychology holds that the primary purpose of perception is to guide action (Gaulin, Steven, & Donald (2003). Moreover, going by Macmillan dictionary 2009, perception is defined as a particular way of understanding or thinking about something. Adekola, (2004) went further to define perception as the process by which people detect, recognize and interpret information from the many stimuli from the environment. One must perceive objects and events before one can react to them or think about them. Each individuals reaction is perceived by perception hence no one can fear, hate, think, love or learn anything without engaging himself in seeing, hearing, touching or smelling.

The senses are evidently main sources of data and knowledge about our environment. They also enables us to continuously assess the condition of our physical, psychological and social existence with a view to being able to adjust to the demands of everyday living, our behaviour depends to a significant extent on our perception.

Influence of Perception on Behaviour

Perception is how we see/view something. Everyone sees thing differently. Those who only see 1/2 of something as opposed to someone who sees the whole lot could behave differently because they didn't get all the details. Perception is one of the most important aspects of

human behaviour. Perception can affect behavior in many different ways. An example of perception affecting behavior: If someone sees something that scares them (perception) they may chose to run (behavior). Perception results in behavior, like flight or fight. You see something that scares youô your mind must decide whether to run or stay and fight, thatôs when the body starts producing adrenaline.

Depending on how we perceive things, we may see the glass either as half-empty or as half-full. The more positively we perceive situations and circumstances the more efficiently we are able to avert a crisis Men usually see things differently to woman so they will behave differently as men and woman tend to look at different details in the same scenario. They both can witness a car crash. To a man, he would perceive the details of the car, colour, make, model and react to how much damage it just got. A female would be more concerned about who was in the car, a mother, a child, the extent of their injuries and would probably be quick to call for ambulance and rush to help.

The perceptions students have about their skills influence the types of activities they select, how much they challenge themselves at those activities and the persistence they exhibit once they are involved in the activities. Studentsô perceptions of continuous assessment, its importance to their academic evaluation determines how much they participate and the importance they put to it. People who tend to see the world in an optimistic manner generally make better leaders and are able to communicate messages to their co-workers and subordinates in a more positive and more effective way (Adekola, 2004).

Concepts of Attitudes.

Every day individuals constantly form and use attitudes. When one gets up in the morning, attitude towards sleep might make the person decide whether to hit the snooze button. Ones attitudes towards food make the person decide what to have for each meal. And, when a friend calls wanting to go out, your response may be affected by your attitudes of the friend and his suggested activity. Because attitudes make up such a large part of our daily thought (cognitive) and behavioral process, it is no surprise that, in its early history, social psychology focused largely on attitudes (Weber, 1992). Importantly, attitudes can be used to predict behavior, though they are no longer considered as strong predictors as they were originally.

Ajzen, (2005) defined attitude as ñan affect for or against a psychological objectò. He went further to say that attitude is a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object.

An attitude can be defined as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or just about anything in your environment (Eyo & Obi-kegunna, 2004). All attitudes take a stance -- positive or negative -- but they can vary in intensity. For example, I may very strongly like a certain type of music, but have only a casual dislike of broccoli. Attitudes form from our experiences (or observing experiences) and serve to guide our future behavior.

Eyo and Obi-kegunna (2004) gave one of the best definitions of attitude saying that an attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting directive or dynamic influence upon the individualôs response to all objects and situations with which it is related. They made it clear that attitude is a product of experience (socialization) which gets the individual ready to react to those aspects of the world in relation to which the attitude was formed. His definition also emphasized the relationship between attitude and behavior. Psychologists defined attitudes as a learned tendency to evaluate things in a certain way. This can include evaluations of people, issues, objects or events. Such evaluations are often positive or negative, but they can also be uncertain at times. For example, you might have mixed feelings about a particular person or issue (Eyo & Obi-kegunna). Attitude could be mental position, emotion, or feeling toward a fact or state (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2009). A predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action, and responses to challenges, incentives, and rewards (together called stimuli).

Social psychologists examine attitudes in terms of three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral.

Cognitive -- This is the mental component, consisting of beliefs and perceptions. E.g.: "I think my friend is kind, charming, and humorous."

Affective -- This is the emotional component. E.g.: "I feel good when I am around my friend."

Behavioral -- This is the action component; more specifically, it consists of the predisposition to act in a certain way toward the object. E.g.: "I try to hang out with my friend whenever I get the chance."
Though most attitudes have all three components, they can be more strongly rooted in either the cognitive or the affective component.

How Do Attitudes Influence Behavior?
Once you know someone's attitude, you would think you would be able to predict his behavior toward the object. Indeed, attitudes can be useful prediction tools, but quite frequently they do not predict well. For example, despite a positive attitude towards your friend, you might turn down his request that you go to the movie theatre with him. There are many examples of when attitude-behavior relations are not consistent.

Why is this so? A big reason is that attitudes tend to be general, whereas behavior is specific. While asking you about your attitude towards a particular friend is fairly specific, a better question might be "What is your attitude towards going to the movies with that friend?" or "What is your attitude towards going to the movies with that friend on a weeknight?" Your attitude indicated in response to these questions might be a much better predictor, but then again, your behavior still might not be consistent. This is because attitudes give a *predisposition* to behave in a certain way that is not a guarantee. Situational factors contribute to your choice in behavior. For example, your emotional state may affect your decision to go out are you tired? Did you just get in a fight with a family member? -- It may be that you do not have enough money to see a movie, or you may have too much homework that night.

Social psychologists have determined a few factors that increase the correlation between a person's attitude and actual behavior. First of all, the attitude should be highly specific. Assuming it is specific, and then the accessibility of the attitude is an important factor. Accessibility refers to the strength of an attitude, or how quickly that attitude comes to mind in response to the attitude object. Accessibility depends on direct experience and rehearsal. Also, the frequency with which one rehearses his attitude -- or in other words, how often he thinks about it -- affects its acceptance.

Researchers have discovered that people are more likely to behave according to their attitudes under certain conditions:

1. When your attitudes are the result of personal experience.
2. When you are an expert in the subject.
3. When you expect a favorable outcome.
4. When the attitudes are repeatedly expressed.
5. When you stand to win or lose something due to the issue.

Students Attitude towards Academic Evaluation.

Behaviour is an important part of the information and experience on which attitude formation is based (Eyo & Obi-kegunna, 2004). The studentsô attitude and behavior towards academic evaluation may be influenced by the educational experience of the students, both in terms of the learning environment, the assessment method and techniques used. These may draw attention to the potential but unintentional pressures placed on students which may lead them to engage in academic misconduct (Rennie & Rudlund, 2002). Academic misconduct among the profession is an area of concern; it is important for nurses to be honest and trustworthy, as trust is a fundamental requirement for good relationship both with patients and colleagues.

It is observed that suboptimal inspection of studentsô work and lack of feedback prior to examination may result in the students feeling that their work is not valued. The lack of value placed on the work may demotivate students and encourage fraudulent behavior like lending work for other students to copy, resubmitting work already submitted by others, writing a piece of work for another student, plagiarism (copying other studentsô work, seminar and projects), cheating in exams and buying or stealing past objective questions. How action influence attitude depends on the level of information processing, usually through self perception process; and so some students will actively exploit the opportunities offered by evaluation methods and techniques which allows them to obtain good grades without understanding or without personal commitments to what is being studied. Attitudes toward evaluation consist of the studentsô self-reported interest in and effect toward school and their classes. Research studies have consistently indicated that young students who achieve in school tend to be interested in learning (Drew, 2001). Studentsô interest in their course work is related to their use of self regulatory strategies as well as their motivation. In addition teachersô personality and organization may affect studentsô academic evaluation and achievement. Studentsô attitudes towards their teachers and courses are influenced by their interest in the course as well as the perceived personal relevance and future utility of the course. Therefore, we must consider the importance of developing strategies to encourage

appropriate attitudes and behavior at the undergraduate level in order to minimize academic misconduct.

Continuous Assessment in Nursing Education in Nigeria

School based assessment (SBA) is mostly used for the upgrading of student between levels and final certification at the completion of a course of study in Nigeria. The continuous assessment is a component of every semester examination of students and the accumulation of studentsô semester examination results make up the grade of their certificate. The continuous assessment component takes 20 or 20% of every examination score depending on the specification of institutions. Considering that 40% is accepted as pass mark on semesters examinations of all institution, the 20 or 20% allocated to continuous assessment alone is significant currently continuous assessment does not attach the kind of attention accorded to examinations even though globally, attention is being paid on how to ensure equity and sadness in assessment and governments as well as schools have evolved mechanisms to curb examination malpractices.

According to Mills, (2001) if the school of nursing is using summative assessment only then the students are in danger of failing their assessment, should they performance much below on that one important occasion (final examination). Continuous assessment overcomes the weaknesses caused by summative evaluation by sampling on a continuous basis, all of studentôs outputs in a course. It allows students to demonstrate their ability and developments on an ongoing basis so that students who work consistently well but is not good at sitting examinations is not placed at disadvantage compared with lazy students who do the minimum amount of work needed to pass such examinations.

In the school of nursing setting and the universities this might involve assessing all of a studentôs course work in the form of tests quiz, projects, term papers, seminars etc but in the clinical setting continuous assessment x-rays a studentôs nursing practice on a continuous basis so that no particular nursing skill can be said to have been passed on once-and-for all basis. It makes the assessment more realistic.

Advantages of Continuous Assessment in Nursing Education.

So many advantages are there of continuous assessment. According to Peters, (2011) one of the advantages is that the student constantly demonstrate the studentôs level of knowledge and this is something that summative evaluation cannot accomplish.

1. Continuous assessment is a powerful diagnostic tool that enables students to understand the areas as in which they are having difficulty and to concentrate their efforts in these areas.
2. Continuous assessment also allows teachers to monitor the impact of their lessons / lectures on student understanding.
3. In continuous assessment, teachers assess the curriculum as implemented in the class room. It also allows teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching strategies as dictated by the needs of their students.
4. Continuous assessment enables students to monitor their achievements of grade level goals and to visualize their progress towards those goals before it is too late to achieve them.

Disadvantages of Continuous Assessment in Nursing Education.

Like every other thing in life that has advantage, continuous assessment has its disadvantages too.

1. It consumes a lot of time.
2. Asking students to imbibe continuous assessment may be to them as being under surveillance, and that every error they make count against them-giving rise to different types of stress than during terminal exams.
3. It appears more costly to maintain than summative assessment.
4. It requires much and careful planning.

Another problem is the large number of assessments students have to go through, and the larger number of mark recordings teachers have to make.

Theoretical review

The Theoretical Frame work of this study is based on Ivan Pavlov theory of classical conditioning.

In Ivan Pavlov Theory of Classical Conditioning

In Ivan Pavlov theory of classical conditioning of 1929-1936, Pavlov performed an experiment on dogs and discovered that dogs learnt to salivate in response to a bell.

In the experiment, Pavlov used a bell to call the dogs to their food and after a few repetitions, the dogs started to salivate in response to the bell. Pavlov called the bell the

conditioned or conditional stimulus (CS) because its effect depended on its association with food. He called the food the unconditioned stimulus (US) because its effect did not depend on previous experience. Likewise, the response to the CS was the conditioned response (CR) and that to the US was the unconditioned response (UR). The timing between the presentation of the CS and US is integral to facilitating the conditioned response. Pavlov found that the shorter the interval between the bells ring and the appearance of the food the more quickly the dog learned the conditioned response and the stronger it was. Many trials hand been given in each of which the bell was sounded and food was simultaneous (slightly later) presented. It was thought therefore that studentôs would get good grades whenever the teacher taught and students were exposed to many trails at 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 conditioned response (CR) which is 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 wherever a certain stimulus, the unconditioned stimulus US was presented.

Application to Study

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 will be 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 stimulus and academic performance of students as response.

Empirical Review

Much has not been done on nursing studentsô perceptions and attitudes towards continuous assessment. But the studies that have been done on students generally will be discussed.

A study was carried out by Hanan, (2009) to determine Studentsô and Teachersô Perceptions of the Assessment Programme: Summative versus Formative assessment at the King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Science, College of Medicine, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In the study students were recruited by purposeful sampling approach, 56 out of the 61 students who had experienced the assessment programme of the clinical years were invited to participate in the study, 28 students, participated in seven semi-structured focused group interviews, each group interviewed were attended by 4 students, purposeful sampling was also used to select 12 teachers out of the pool of clinical directors and clinical supervisors. The entire 12 teachers were interviewed individually. The studentôs mean age was 26.74years.

82% of the students clearly preferred formative assessment due to its attached feedback. This feedback helped them to identify the learning objectives and improve their study strategies. The studentôs views contradicted the opinions expressed by some of the teachers, who stated that summative assessment was an essential step in studentôs assessment, leading to fair assessment; teachers did not deny the importance of formative assessment. However they thought that it was time consuming. On the other hand, 5% of the students were not able to decide the superiority of summative or formative role in their learning, each one according to them has advantages and disadvantages. 76% of the students said summative assessment creates anxiety and stress; one hour of examination will determine your future. This stressful situation makes some students to resort to sporadic, patchy reading through hunting the information they think is important or might come in their examination. Summative assessment is also considered as unfair, it didnôt reflect the effort they put and activities they do across the block.

Struyven, Dochy & Janassens (2002) in their review on studentôs perceptions about assessment in higher education at University of Leuven Centre for Research on Teachers and Higher Education, New Castle. The research design used was descriptive design while the sampling technique was purposive sampling. The population consists of all the students; the sample size was 216 students. Data was collected using researcher developed questionnaire and analyzed with percentages, mean and standard deviation. Struyven et al in the research found out that students perceptions about assessment have considerable influences on students approaches to learning and that studentsô approaches influence the ways in which students perceive assessment. Furthermore, it was found that students hold strong views

about different formats and methods of assessment. For example, within conventional assessment multiple choice format exams are seen as favourable assessment methods in comparison to essay type question but when conventional assessment and alternative assessment methods are compared, students perceive alternative assessment as being fairer than the traditional assessment methods.

Sansging and Lanke (2004), Researched on perception of pharmacy students towards continuous assessment in University of Houstom, College of Pharmacy. The result stipulated that participants (153 students, response rate 72.5) had slightly negative attitude towards continuous assessment in general. The American Association of college of pharmacy (AACOP) has acknowledged this trend and recommended continuous assessment of students of programmes as a means of delivering higher quality education in pharmacy schools; they have adopted this form of assessment method in order to monitor their curriculum.

A qualitative study was carried out by Idowu and Esere (2009) to review the implementation of Continuous Assessment in few selected Nigerian secondary schools, within Ilorin metropolis. The sample consisted of 500 stratified randomly selected teachers (age range 30-55), male 198, and female 302) form 10 randomly selected schools within IIorin metropolis. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussion which centred around the teachersô continuous assessment practices based on the four basic attributes (systematic, comprehensive, cumulative and guidance oriented) that characterise continuous assessment.

Results show that the continuous assessment practices of most of the teachers were faulty and deviated markedly from policy guidelines. It is recommended that in-service training be organized for secondary school teachers in Nigeria, to educate them more on continuous assessment guidelines as spelt out in National policy on Education for the attainment of the overall educational goals. Idowu and Esere (2009) summarised by saying that in order to evaluate the new educational system, one policy that cuts across all educational levels throughout Nigeria is that of continuous assessment. In section 1 of the national policy on education (revised 2004) which deals with the philosophy and grads of education in Nigeria, paragraph 9 (g) sates that ñeducational assessment and evaluation shall be liberalized by their being based in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of individualò. This statement is well amplified in subsequent section of the document dealing with primacy education (section 4), secondary education (section 9) and tertiary education and finally in

section 12 which deals with planning, administration and supervision of education. The repeated emphasis being placed on continuous assessment is a clear evidence of its importance.

Another study was carried out by Ihiegbulen (2004), to find out the relationship between continuous assessment and examination cognitive scores of two groups of students admitted into the program at Federal College of Education Omoku during the 1991/92 academic session, with 50 students It was found out that a substantial and significant degree of relationship existed between continuous assessment and examination scores of each groups; both groups did differ significantly, in degree of relationship between their two sets of scores.

Olatoye, (2006) made a research to assess studentôs perception of continuous assessment as a precursor to academic performance among students in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun state. Five hundred and five (505) students were randomly selected and divided into two groups. The result indicated there is a significant difference between the perception of male and female students, to continuous assessment and there is no significant difference between perception of student from urban and rural areas (students).

A study carried out by Owolabi, and Onuka, (2000), to determine the challenges and prospects of implementing continuous assessment in the Nigerian school system. Secondary Schools in Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara State, located in the central region of Nigeria were sampled for use in the study. It employed survey research design executed through the collection of ex post facto data. Two hundred and forty respondents comprising one hundred and twenty teachers and one hundred and twenty students were respectively sampled and used as subjects in the study. Two questionnaires, one for teachers and one for students, were developed and used to collect data which were analysed using mainly percentages.

Findings show that the greatest challenges of implementing CA in Nigerian secondary schools include poor level of preparedness for tests on the part of students, poor test administration procedures, poor handling of scores and feedback to students, poor coverage of instructional contents by test contents, large classes, inadequate time for tests and lack of knowledge and skills of the appropriate evaluation techniques. Respondents suggested that time should be given to implementing CA, teachers should be adequately trained in the techniques of evaluation, relevant modern technology for its conduct and recording should be

provided for teachers. It was discovered that Nigerians know that CA possesses some prospects if properly implemented. These include reducing examination malpractices, engenering quality study habit in the student, improving educational and learning outcomes attainment among others. It was thus recommended that teachers should be given relevant training on modern evaluation techniques and schools provided the enabling environment for CA to work.

Another study was also carried out by Ogunfowokan, (2008) on the attitude of teachers and students towards continuous assessment practices in Ijebu- North secondary schools using descriptive survey research method.The population of the study consists of all the secondary school in Ijebu- North Local Government. The samples used in this study were selected from five (5) secondary schools in Ijebu- North Local Government in Ogun State. Twenty students were selected from each school which makes up one hundred (100) students. 10 teachers were selected; total numbers of 150 questionnaires were distributed, research questions were answered, data analyzed using simple percentage and frequency distribution in a tubular form with student ñtò statistics. The result revealed that there was a significant difference between teachersô attitude and studentsô attitude towards continuous assessment in junior secondary schools and there was no significant difference in the performance of male and female studentsô attitude towards continuous assessment in schools.
Based on the above findings, the implication for teachers and students attitudes towards continuous assessment practices and conclusion was made.

Another research work carried out by Dibu and Wole, (2000), on studentsô perception of continuous assessment as correlate of their performance in continuous assessment test in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue state. The study adopted the descriptive survey design titled Physics continuous assessment test and questionnaire on studentsô perception of continuous assessment (PCAT and QSPCA). 120 respondents (students) were randomly selected from four secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area. In analyzing the findings mean score and standard deviation was used on the research questions. With respect to the hypotheses t-test technique was used.

Analysis using the t-test showed that there is no significant difference between studentsô perception of continuous assessment and their performance in continuous assessment test. There is no significant difference in male and female (gender) studentsô perception and performance in continuous assessment test in makurdi local government area. Also, there is

no significant difference in rural and urban (location) studentsô perception and performance in continuous assessment test in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. It is recommended that stakeholders of education should give proper orientation to teachersô and studentsô on the importance of continuous assessment. Also, it should be made known to studentsô and teachersô that till date, there is no better way or method of evaluation in Physics than the use of continuous assessment.

Summary of Literature Review

From the above write up continuous assessment, can be seen as those activities, formal and informal undertaken by teachers to obtain information about the knowledge, skills and attitudes of student (Satter, 2009). The researcher is of the opinion that continuous assessment is a better way to judge a studentôs level of knowledge, skill and expertise. That is not to say that traditional examination should never be used but should be used with continuous assessment as it provides superior results. Despite its importance, continuous assessment has not fully been implemented and even where it is implemented it still faces a lot of challenges, lack of funds, poor record keeping, in experienced teachers and lack of regular workshop or update on the topic. Moreover most of the students are still not serious with the policy. The reviewed literature has shown that studentsô perceptions about assessment have considerable influence on studentsô approaches to learning. Both internationally and locally not much studies have been done on students nurses perception of continuous assessment. Pavlov theory of classical conditioning was used as the theoretical frame work for this study. The empirical review of this work showed that not much study have been done in the area of perceptions and attitudes of students nurses towards continuous assessment and this work is hoped to go a long way in filling this gap.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter is presented under the following subheadings: research design, area of study, population for the study, instrument for data collection, validity of instrument, reliability of instrument, ethical consideration, and procedure for data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Design

Cross-sectional descriptive design was used for this study. This design is concerned with the present and describes how people feel or react to phenomenon under investigation. In this study, the design helped the researcher to describe how students feel, see and their attitudes towards continuous assessment in academic evaluation. Cross-sectional descriptive design was considered appropriate for this study because data was collected at a single point in time and allowed the researcher to study the studentsô views and feeling about continuous assessment without any form of manipulation.

Area of study

This study was conducted in Department of Nursing Sciences of Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC), Enugu state, Nigeria. UNEC is an annex of the main Campus at Nsukka and is Located at the center of Enugu Metropolis in Enugu North Local Government Area. UNEC is bounded by Kenyatta market at the Southern side, Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Campus III on the northern side. World trade centre (WTC) primary school at the western side and residential areas at the eastern side. The campus has five faculties ï faculty of Law, faculty of Medical sciences, faculty of Health Sciences and Technology, faculty of Environmental Sciences and faculty of Business Administration.

The Department of Nursing Sciences is one of the five departments within the Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology. The Department runs a five year generic/baccalaureate nursing programme. At the end, successful students are awarded BNSC degree by the university, as well as RN and RM by Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria. The Department was instituted in 1983 and started with direct entry B.Sc programme that runs for three years. In 2005, the department started the five year generic/baccalaureate programme. The postgraduate programme commenced in 2004.

Population of the study

The target population for the study consisted of all the 454 undergraduate nursing students in the Department of Nursing Sciences, University of Nigeria, Enugu campus .The distribution of the studentsô population by class level and gender from the school records (2014) is presented in the Table I below.

Table 1: Population of Undergraduate Nursing Students in UNEC

Class level	Number of Students	Males	Females
200	97	25	72
300	122	20	102
400	131	15	116
500	104	20	84
Total	454	80	374

Source: School Records of Department of Nursing Sciences, UNEC in 2014.

Subjects of the study

The subjects of the study were all the 454 undergraduate nursing students of the Department of Nursing Sciences. This number constitutes of 80 males and 374 female students. Since all the students were eligible, they were all included in the study, there was no sampling procedure.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Willingness to participate in the study
2. Must be 200-500 level student of the Department of Nursing Sciences, UNEC.
3. Availability at time of data collection.

Instrument for data collection

The instrument used for data collection was the researcherôs developed questionnaire generated from reviewed literature and based on the objectives set for the study. The questionnaire has two sections A and B. Section A is concerned with the respondentsô demographic characteristic. The demographic characteristics include age, sex, year of study,

marital status, religion etc. Section B contains items designed to elicit responses on perception and attitude of student nurses on continuous assessment as part of academic evaluation. Section B is made up of 77 items based on the objectives, research questions and hypothesis of the study. Items 6-81 are presented on a Likert type scale ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). There are four sub-scales namely: views about C.A. (13 items), views on the various methods/ techniques of C.A. (23 items), perceived benefits of C.A. (20 items), challenges of C.A. encountered by student (11 items) and attitudes towards C.A. (9 items). Apart from the items on likert scale, one other question was asked to detect studentsô preferred method of C.A. Mean scores of 2.5 and above formed basis for the acceptance of the result.

Validity of Instrument

The questionnaire was submitted to the project supervisor after construction to ascertain the face validity. The instrument was also given to two other senior lecturers in the Department of Nursing Sciences University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus who are specialist in Nursing Education, to examine the face validity against the set objectives and research questions in line with the specific items in the instrument. Their suggestions were effected and fully approved by the supervisor, irrelevant questions were removed, ambiguous questions reframed and the final copy was produced and approved by the supervisor.

Reliability of Instrument

The questionnaire was subjected to pilot testing in smaller but similar populations of 40 undergraduate nursing students of Ebonyi State University, Abakiliki to test for clarity and reliability. Questionnaire was administered once. Split half method was used to test for the internal consistency of the items. The data generated were splinted into two using odd and even numbers. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was employed to test for the reliability. A reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained and this was considered appropriate.

Ethical consideration

Ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku/Ozalla, and the College of Medicine University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (Appendix IV) was obtained. A letter of introduction was obtained from the Department of Nursing Sciences. Administrative permission to carry out the study was obtained from the Dean Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology. Informed consent was

obtained from the students before the administration of the questionnaire. (Appendix ii. iiiIii & iv).

Procedure for data collection

With ethical approval and written permission to carry out the study, the various class representatives were approached for their assistance. Before collection of data the researcher visited the Department to familiarize with the students. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and how to fill the questionnaire to the students. The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of four research assistants who were trained on how to administer the questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered on the spot in the classroom during break time (i.e. between1-2pm).The data collection lasted for 2 weeks.

Method of Data Analysis

All analysis was done with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 17.0. Data collected were collated, tailed and analyzed using descriptive statistics namely, frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistical procedure that was employed for testing of the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant were one-way ANOVA, the t- test and Chi-Square. The choice of this statistics is based on the fact that ANOVA is used to test the effect of two or more independent variables on dependent variables. It is also used to compare variance between groups with the variance within the groups (Polit and Beck 2010). All analysis was done with statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 17.0.

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CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter is concerned with- presentation of results guided by the research objectives and hypothesis

Return rate

Four hundred and fifty four (454) questionnaires were administered, out of which 435 of them were returned properly filled, thus giving 98.81% return rate. The generated data for the study were collated, organized and subjected to data analysis for different objectives and hypothesis set for the study. The results were presented on Tables objectives by objectives and according to the set hypotheses.

Demographic characteristic of respondents

Descriptive statistics involving frequencies and their percentages were used to analyse data on demographic profiles of the respondents. The results of the analyses were presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Demographic distribution of the respondents

n = 435

Demographic characteristics	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Age range		
18-23 years	199	45.7
24 ï 29 years	189	43.4
30 35 years	36	8.3
36 ï 42 years	11	2.5
Mean age = 24.8 ± 3.96 years		
Sex		
Male	72	16.6
~~Male~~	363	83.4
Female		
Marital status		
Married	89	20.5
Single	346	79.5
Year of study		
2nd year	90	20.7
3rd year	117	26.9
4th year	132	30.3
5th year	96	22.1
Religion		
Muslim	1	0.2
Christianity	434	99.8

The result in Table 2 above showed that the age of the respondents in this study ranges from 18-41 years with the mean age and standard deviation of the students being 24.8 and 3.9 respectively. Most of the respondents 199(45.7%) were within the age range of 18-23years; 189 (43.4%) were within the range of 24 -29 years. Others 36(8.2%) and 11 (2.5%) were 30 ï 35 years and 36-41 years respectively. Their sex distribution showed that more than three quarter 363 (83.4%) of them were females, while 72 (16.6%) of them were males. Majority 346 (79.5%) of the respondents were single, while 89 (20.5%) of them were married. As regards year of study, 90 (20.7%) of them were 2nd year students, 117 (26.9%) of them were 3rd year students, 132 (30.3%) of them were 4th year students, while 96 (22.1%) of them were 5th year students. Majority ofAlmost all the respondents 434 (99.8%) were Christians except 1 (0.2%) who was a Muslim.

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Objective 1: To determine undergraduate nurses' views about continuous assessment as means of academic evaluations.

The data generated to realize this objective was subjected to descriptive analysis using means and standard deviation. The data were analysed item by item and the means and standard deviations for each of the items on this subscale were presented on Table 3.

Table 3: Students' views about continuous assessment (CA)

n=435

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	x	S̄D	Decision
6.	C.A. is an important tool in the evaluation of student academic performance	228	120	23	4	3.59	0.64	Accepted
7.	C.A. encourages students to prepare better for their final examination	289	128	16	2	3.62	0.581	Accepted
8.	C.A. is an integral part of educational evaluation.	238	162	33	2	3.46	0.655	Accepted
9.	C.A. reduces the anxiety that is experienced when it was only an end of course examination.	199	184	39	13	3.31	0.757	Accepted
10.	C.A. improves studentsô participation	217	168	48	2	3.38	0.696	Accepted
11.	C.A. provides timely knowledge of academic evaluation results which affects subsequent academic performance of student.	199	196	33	7	3.35	0.690	Accepted
12.	C.A. is a motivator and a major vehicle for learning.	211	180	38	6	3.37	0.701	Accepted
13.	Scores from C.A. should be added to the total score or should form part of the overall score.	333	87	13	2	3.73	0.535	Accepted
14.	C.A. is a waste of time because teachers do not score them or make use of them.	59	82	100	194	2.99	1.086	Accepted
15.	Time constraint is a major factor in carrying out the assignments.	115	166	108	46	2.80	0.948	Accepted
16.	Inadequate resources for carrying out the assignments *	104	136	143	52	2.67	0.970	Accepted
17.	C.A. is time wasting because many student copy others work and submit it.*	83	100	131	121	2.67	1.078	Accepted
18.	C.A. can be a source of bias while grading the student by the teacher.*	91	118	163	91	2.52	1.041	Accepted
Mean of means					**3.19**	**± 0.29**		

*Negative items: The higher the score, the more negative the perception of the item.

The result on Table 3 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of each of the 13 items on studentsô views about continuous assessment. The mean scores and standard deviations for the items ranged from 2.52 (SD = 1.04) to 3.73 (SD = 0.54).

The result shows that the 13 items had mean scores above 2.5 which is the scale critical mean. The findings that ñC.A. should be added to the total score or should form part of the overall scoreò (mean=3.73, SD=0.54); ñC. A. encourages students to prepare better for their final examinationò (mean=3.62, SD=0.58) and ñC. A is an important tool in the evaluation of student academic performanceò (mean=3.59, SD=0.64) were the three highest scored items on students views about continuous assessment in academic evaluations subscale.

The items ñC. A. can be a source of bias while grading the student by the teacherò (mean=2.52, SD=1.04); ñInadequate resources for carrying out the assignmentsò (mean=2.67, SD=1.08); and ñC.A. is time wasting because many student copy others work and submitò (mean=2.67, SD=1.08) were the three lowest scored items. However, some negatively worded items ñInadequate resources for carrying out the assignmentsò; (mean=2.67, SD=0.97) ñC.A. is time wasting because many students copy others work and submit itò (mean=2.67, SD=1.08) and ñC.A. can be a source of bias while grading the student by the teacherò (mean=2.52, SD=1.04) received scores above the critical value of 2.5.

All the 13 items represent the studentsô views about continuous assessment in academics evaluation. The average mean score for this subscale was 3.19 (SD=0.29). This implies that the undergraduate studentsô nurses have positive perceptions about continuous assessment as part of academic evaluation.

Objective 2: To determine undergraduate nurses' opinion on the methods/techniques used in C. A.

The data generated to realise this objective was subjected to descriptive data analysis using mean and standard deviations. The data were analysed item by item and the means and standard deviations for each of the items on this subscale were presented on Table 4.

Table 4: Students views on the various methods/techniques of continuous assessment.

n=435

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
19.	Home assignments make students to read extensively.	182	188	50	15	3.20	0.768	Accepted
20.	Group presentation does not give opportunity for all students to participate	164	157	76	38	1.97	0.950	Rejected
21.	Essay items tests student ability to supply rather than select correct answers.	188	171	56	20	3.21	0.838	Accepted
22.	Essay discourages guess work and encourages good study habit.	232	146	39	18	3.36	0.812	Accepted
23.	Essay allows student to present their ideas as detailed as they choose so as to show some deep knowledge.	253	144	31	7	3.48	0.700	Accepted
24.	Essay helps to improve students writing skills, such as writing speed and legibility	241	142	43	9	3.41	0.752	Accepted
25.	Essay questions do not cover the course content and the objectives as comprehensively as possible.	136	154	89	56	2.85	0.006	Accepted
26.	Spelling, grammatical errors and bad writing affects studentsô results in essay question.	196	172	58	9	3.28	0.769	Accepted
27.	Essay scoring is not reliable (it is subjective).	134	164	82	55	2.13	0.993	Rejected
28.	Performance task (practical) helps in mastering skills while carrying out procedure.	232	151	44	8	3.40	0.744	Accepted
29.	Term papers develop studentsô skill in writing and organization.	237	157	30	11	3.43	0.732	Accepted
30.	Term papers consume a lot of money and time*	166	194	61	14	3.18	0.788	Accepted
31.	Peer assessment encourages students to assess their	161	226	41	7	3.24	0.686	Accepted

	performance and make amends where necessary.							
32.	The goal of group assignment is not achieved as not all the members of the group participate in carrying out the group work.*	213	159	46	17	3.31	0.812	Accepted
33.	Use of class attendance is not a very good way to assess students as the teacher may be biased in his C. A. evaluation.*	152	173	61	49	2.98	0.971	Accepted
34.	The observation technique of assessment is not good as it can be teacher biased.*	154	170	81	30	3.03	0.904	Accepted
35.	Objective test items are generally fair to all examines.	148	194	68	25	3.07	0.850	Accepted
36.	Multiple choice questions predominantly test basic knowledge.	161	198	60	16	3.16	0.795	Accepted
37.	MCQ has a wide applicability in the measurement of various phases of achievements.	160	208	56	11	3.19	0.751	Accepted
38.	MCQ is easy to score and saves time	202	149	61	23	3.22	0.878	Accepted
39.	Objectives test items lend themselves to guessing, especially when the test items are not skilfully developed.*	193	197	35	10	3.32	0.719	Accepted
40.	Check list monitor and record anecdotal information	128	197	100	10	3.02	0.786	Accepted
41.	Interviews assess individual group performance.	130	230	60	15	3.09	0.753	Accepted
	Mean of means					**3.11**	**0.29**	

*Negative items: the higher the score, the more negative the perception of the item.

The result on Table 4 showed the mean scores and standard deviations of each of the 23-items on the nursing students' opinion on the methods/techniques used in continuous

assessment subscale. The item mean scores and standard deviations for the 23 items on this subscale ranged from 1.97 (SD=0.95) to 3.48 (SD=0.70). The result revealed that 21 out of the 23 items on the subscale had mean scores above 2.5 which is the critical subscale mean, the remaining 2 items had mean scores below 2.5.

The 3 highest scored items in this subscale were ñEssay allows students to present their ideas as detailed as they choose so as to show some deep knowledgeò (mean=3.48, SD=0.73); ñTerm papers develop studentsô skill in writing and organisationsò (mean= 3.43, SD=0.73); ñEssay helps to improve students writing skills, such as writing speed and legibilityò (mean= 3.41, SD=0.75).

The 3 lowest scored items in this subscale were ñGroup presentation does not give opportunity for all students to participateò (mean=1.97, SD=0.95); ñEssay scoring is not reliable (it is subjective)ò (mean=2.13, SD=0.99) and ñEssay questions do not cover the course content and the objectives as comprehensively as possibleò (mean=2.85, SD=1.01).

The average mean score for this subscale is 3.11 (SD=0.29) and was accepted. This implies that the undergraduate nurses had positive perception of the various methods /techniques of C. A.

However, some negatively worded items, ñUse of class attendance is not a very good way to assess students as the teacher may be biased in his C. A. evaluationò (mean 2.98, ± 0.97); ñThe observation technique of assessment is not good as it can be teacher biasedò (mean=3.03, ± 0.90); ñTerm papers consume a lot of money and timeò (mean=3.18, ±0.79); ñThe goal of group assignment is not achieved as not all the members of the group participate in carrofng out the group workò (mean=3.31 ±0.81) and ñObjectives test items lend themselves to guessing, especially when the test items are not skilfully developedò (mean=3.32± 0.72), received scores above the critical value of 2.5.

– **Objective 3: To elicit nursing students' awareness of the benefits of continuous assessment.**

The data presented to realize this objective was subjected to descriptive data analysis using mean and standard deviations for each of the 20 items to elicit nursing studentsô awareness of the benefits of continuous assessment subscale presented on Table 5.

Table 5: Students perceived benefits of continuous assessment.

n=435

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
42.	C.A. is used in diagnosing learnerôs strengths and needs	184	184	56	11	3.24	0.771	Accepted
43.	C.A. encourages good study habits in students.	224	165	38	8	3.39	0.724	Accepted
44.	C.A. facilitates coverage of course content.	190	175	64	6	3.26	0.756	Accepted
45.	C. A. provides feedback on teaching and learning.	177	202	47	9	3.26	0.730	Accepted
46.	C. A. assesses various components of learning.	172	181	68	14	3.17	0.807	Accepted
47.	C. A. is used to assess behaviour and personal development and values of students.	192	125	81	37	3.09	0.981	Accepted
48.	C. A. enable students to monitor their achievements of grade level, goals and to visualize their progress towards these goals before it is too late to achieve them	175	203	51	6	3.26	0.714	Accepted
49.	C. A. contributes positively to studentsôperformance in academic evaluation.	207	198	27	3	3.40	0.638	Accepted
50.	C. A. encourages students to assess their performance and make amends where necessary.	218	177	37	3	3.40	0.673	Accepted
51.	C. A. leads to individual skill acquisition.	142	205	72	16	3.31	0.796	Accepted

52.	C. A. is done to monitor the progress of learning.	185	202	44	4	3.31	0.686	Accepted
53.	C. A. is of immense benefits to students in the final examination.	201	186	38	10	3.33	0.731	Accepted
54.	C. A. provides prediction of performance on the end of year examination.	191	154	75	15	3.20	0.844	Accepted
55.	C. A. improves studentsô participation in class.	174	203	53	5	3.26	0.710	Accepted
56.	C.A. is used for guidance and counselling purposes.	152	173	87	23	3.04	0.872	Accepted
57.	C. A. gives room for creativity.	161	174	81	19	3.10	0.851	Accepted
58.	C. A. provides basis for instructional placements.	130	194	95	16	3.01	0.816	Accepted
59.	C. A. guides instructions.	125	209	84	17	3.02	0.799	Accepted
60.	C. A. helps in proper evaluation of the curriculum.	146	197	79	13	3.09	0.793	Accepted
61.	C. A. helps the teacher to assess her instructional materials and methods from time to time.	169	204	54	8	3.23	0.732	Accepted
	Mean of means					**3.21**	**±0.43**	

The result in Table 5 showed the mean score and standard deviations of each of the 20 items on studentsô perceived benefits of continuous assessment. Their mean scores and standard deviations ranged from 3.01. (SD = 0.82) to 3.40 (SD = .64). This shows that all the items were above the scale mean of 2.5 and they were all accepted.

The 3 highest scored items in this subscale were ñC. A. encourages students to assess their performance and make amends where necessaryò (mean=3.40, SD=0.67); ñC.A.contributes positively to studentsô performance in academic evaluationò (mean=3.40, SD=0.64) and ñC.A. encourages good study habits in studentsò (mean=3.39, SD=0.72).

The three lowest scored items were ñC.A. provide basis for instructional placementò (mean= 3.01, SD=0.82); ñC.A. guidves instructionsò (mean=3.02, SD=0.80) and ñC.A. is used for guidance and counselling purposesò (mean=3.04, SD=0.87).

The average mean score for the perceived benefits subscale was 3.21 (SD = 0.43). This implies that the students had positive perception on the benefits of C. A.

Objective 4: To identify challenges faced by nursing students in carrying out C. A.

The data generated to realize this objective were subjected to descriptive data analysis using mean and standard deviations. The data were analysed item by item and the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the 11 items on challenges of continuous assessment subscale were presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Challenges of continuous assessment encountered by students

n = 435

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
62.	Enough time is not given to students to do their homework and term paper	166	132	108	29	3.00	0.948	Accepted
63.	Difficulty in meeting up with the financial demands of C. A.	142	183	90	20	3.03	0.847	Accepted
64.	The assessor may be biased in his perception of the performance of students.	182	161	78	14	3.17	0.835	Accepted
65.	Poorly equipped library for research and other assignments.	182	175	66	12	3.21	0.798	Accepted
66.	The teacher student ratio is very small.	169	155	95	16	3.10	0.864	Accepted
67.	C. A. is more stressful than summative assessment.	93	169	139	34	2.74	0.883	Accepted
68.	There is malpractice during tests and assignments.	124	178	126	37	2.83	0.942	Accepted
69.	C. A. is not well planned or organized as so many assignments come at the same time.	131	204	72	28	3.01	0.852	Accepted
70.	The class size is large for the teacher to carryout effective student evaluation by C. A.	135	171	110	19	2.97	0.859	Accepted
71.	Lecturers lack technical knowledge on how to design valid C. A.	114	154	115	52	2.76	0.974	Accepted
72.	Teachers are not updated on the current techniques.	120	128	141	46	2.74	0.979	Accepted
	Mean of means					**2.9**	**±0.52**	

The result on Table 6 showed the mean scores and standard deviations of each of the 11 items on challenges of C. A. encountered by students. Their mean scores and standard deviations ranged from 2.74 (SD = 0.98) to 3.21 (SD = 0.80). This shows that all the items were above the scale critical mean of 2.50 and they were accepted. The mean of means for this subscale was 2.96 (SD = 0.52) and it was accepted. This implies that the respondents had challenges in carrying out C. A.

The 3 highest scored items on the subscale, challenges of continuous assessment encountered by students were ñPoorly equipped library for research and other assignmentsò (mean= 3.21, SD=0.80); ñThe assessor may be biased in his perception of the performance of studentsò (mean = 3.17, SD=0.84) and ñThe teacher student ratio is very smallò (mean=3.10, SD=0.86).

The lowest 3 scored items were ñC.A. is more stressful than summative assessmentò (mean=2.74 SD=0.88); ñTeachers are not updated on the current techniques of C. A.ò (mean=2.74 SD=0.98) and ñlecturers lack technical knowledge on how to design valid C.A.ò (mean=2.76, SD=0.97).

Objective 5: To determine undergraduate student nurses' attitudes towards C. A.

The data generated to realize this objective were subjected to descriptive data analysis using mean and standard deviations. The data were analysed item by item and the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the 9 items on students nurses attitudes towards continuous assessment presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Students Attitudes towards C. A.

n-435

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
73	C.A. is essential in studentsô academic evaluation.	235	167	25	8	3.45	0.688	Accepted
74.	C. A. scores should not be used in calculating studentsô final scores in their academic evaluation.	115	104	101	115	2.50	1.145	Accepted
75.	C. A. should constitute part of studentsô academic evaluation.	233	168	31	3	3.45	0.658	Accepted
76.	C. A. contributes significantly to studentsô performance in academic evaluation.	233	158	38	6	3.42	0.709	Accepted
77.	C. A. is a mere waste of time.	80	85	89	181	2.85	1.153	Accepted
78.	I very much welcome C. A.	229	145	44	17	3.35	0.815	Accepted
79.	C. A. should be removed from educational evaluation.	72	78	88	197	2.94	1.138	Accepted
80.	I donôt like C. A.	60	70	116	189	3.00	1.072	Accepted
81.	C. A. are not scored by lectures most of the time and so why bother students.	98	119	120	98	2.50	1.074	Accepted
	Mean of mean					**3.03**	**± 0.59**	

The result in Table 7 showed the means and standard deviations of each of the 9 items on the studentsô attitude towards continuous assessment subscale. The mean scores and standard deviations for the items ranged from 2.50 (SD = 1.07) to 3.45 (SD = 0.69).

The three highest scored items on the subscale were ñC.A. is essential in studentsô academic evaluationò (mean=3.45, SD=0.69); ñC. A. should constitute part of studentsô academic evaluationò (mean=3.45, SD=0.66) and ñC.A. contributes significantly to students performance in academic evaluationò (mean=3.42, SD=0.71).

The three lowest scored items on the subscale were ñC.A. scores should not be used in calculating studentsô final scores in their academic evaluationò (mean=2.50, SD=1.01); ñC. A. is not scored by lecturers most of the time and so why border studentsò (mean=2.50, SD=1.07) and ñC.A. is a mere waste of timeò (mean=2.84, SD=1.15). The subscale mean was 3.05 (SD = 0.59) and it was accepted. This implies students have positive attitude towards C.A.

Objective 6: To determine undergraduate student nurses' preferred method of C. A.

Table 8:Students'preferred method of C. A.

n=435

		Frequency	Percent	Chi-Square	Df~~df~~	p-value
Continuous Assessment	Objective Test Items	123	28.3	360.471	9	.000
	TakeHome Assignment	93	21.4			
	Essay Test Item	83	19.1			
	Class Presentation	39	9.0			
	Class Discussion	32	7.4			
	Group Work	28	6.4			
	Term paper	23	5.3			
	Observation	7	1.6			
	Peer Assessment	5	1.1			
	Portfolio	2	.5			
	Total	435	100.0			

Result on Table 8 displayed the preference for the different methods of continuous assessment by the students. A significant difference exists in their preferences, χ^2 (9) = 360.471, $p < .001$, with Objective Test method, 123 (28.3%), being the most preferred, followed by Take Home Assignment, 93 (21.4%) and Essay Test, 83 (19.1%) respectively. Observation method, 7 (1.6%), Peer Assessment, 5 (1.1%) and Portfolio 2, (0.55%) method were the least preferred method respectively.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant relationship between the studentsô view of continuous assessment and their attitudes towards continuous assessment.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Relationship between the students' views of C.A. and their attitudes towards C.A.

	Studentsô Views about C.A.	
	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	P-value
Attitude towards CA	0.260	0.000

The result on Table 9 shows a significant relationship between the studentsô view of continuous assessment and their attitudes towards continuous assessment ($r=0.26$, $p<0.05$). This implies that the studentsô view of continuous assessment has positive influence on their attitudes towards continuous assessment. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference in the view (perception) of continuous assessment among students in different class level.

To test this hypothesis a one-way ANOVA was employed on the overall mean scores of the students in their different class levels. The results of this analysis are presented on Tables 10 and 11 below.

Table 10: Means and standard deviations of students' perceptions of C.A. according to class level.

Year of Study	N	Mean	Std Dev.
2nd year	90	3.18	0.305
3rd year	117	3.16	0.265
4th year	132	3.20	0.312
5th year	96	3.21	0.272
Total	435	3.19	0.290

Table 11: Summary Table of one-way ANOVA for significant class difference in students' perceptions of C.A.

Sources of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p-value
Between groups	0.163	3	0.054	0.646	0.586
Within groups	36.274	431	0.84		
Total	36.438	434			

The result from one-way ANOVA presented on Table11 showed no significant difference in studentsô perceptions of continuous assessment as part of academic evaluation among different (4) class levels (P>0.05). This implies that class level has no influence on studentsô view (perception) of continuous assessment. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant gender difference in the studentsô perception of continuous assessment. To test this hypothesis t-test was used and the result is presented in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Result of t-test analysis on gender difference in the students' perception of continuous assessment.

Gender	N	Mean	Std Dev	T	df	p-value
Male	72	3.15	0.337			
Female	363	3.20	0.279	-1.335	433	0.183
Total	435	3.19	0.290			

The result from t-test analysis presented on Table 12, showed no significant gender difference in students view of continuous assessment as part of academic evaluation; P>0.05. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 4: There will be no significant difference in the attitude towards continuous assessment between male and female students.
To test this hypothesis t-test was used and the result is presented in Table 13 below

Table 13: Result of t-test analysis on gender difference in the students' attitude towards C.A.

Gender	N	Mean	Std Dev	T	df	p-value
Male	72	3.06	0.616			
Female	363	3.05	0.580	-1.335	433	0.183
Total	435	3.05	0.586			

The result on Table 13 showed no significant gender difference in students attitudes towards continuous assessment as part of academic evaluation; P>0.05, the null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 5: There will be no significant relationship in the preferred methods of continuous assessment between male and female students.

To test for this hypothesis, data generated on the preferred method of continuous assessment for male and female students were analysed using Chi-Square (X^2), the results were presented on Table 14 below.

Table 14: Gender difference in preferred methods of C.A.

			Gender					
			Male n=72	Female n=363	Total n=435	Chi-Square	df	Exact p-value
Continuous Assessment	Objective Test	Count	21	102	123	5.675	9	.778
		% within Gender	29.2%	28.1%	28.3%			
	Takehome Assignment	Count	11	82	93			
		% within Gender	15.3%	22.6%	21.4%			
	Essay Test	Count	13	70	83			
		% within Gender	18.1%	19.3%	19.1%			
	Class Presentation	Count	6	33	39			
		% within Gender	8.3%	9.1%	9.0%			
	Class Discussion	Count	7	25	32			
		% within Gender	9.7%	6.9%	7.4%			
	Group Work	Count	8	20	28			
		% within Gender	11.1%	5.5%	6.4%			
	Term paper	Count	4	19	23			
		% within Gender	5.6%	5.2%	5.3%			
	Observation	Count	1	6	7			
		% within Gender	1.4%	1.7%	1.6%			
	Peer Assessment	Count	1	4	5			
		% within Gender	1.4%	1.1%	1.1%			
	Portfolio	Count	0	2	2			
		% within Gender	0.0%m	0.6%	0.5%			
Total		Count	72	363	435			
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

The results in Table 14 showed that 29.2% of males preferred Objective Test compared to 28.1% of females, 15.3% of males preferred Take Home Assignment compared to 22.6% of females, 18.1% of males preferred Essay Test compared to 19.3% of females, 8.3% of males preferred Class Presentation compared 9.1% of females, 9.7% of males preferred Class

Discussion compared to 6.9% of females, 11.1% of males preferred Group Work compared to 5.5% of females, 5.6% of males preferred Term Paper compared to 5.2% of females, 1.4% of males preferred Observation Method compared to 1.7% of females, 1.4% of males preferred Peer Assessment compared to 1.1% of females and 0.0% of males preferred Portfolio compared to 0.6% of females. The preferences of males is not significantly different from the preferences of females, c^2 (9) = 5.675, p = .778. Hence, preference of continuous assessment method does not depend on their gender.

The results in Table 14 showed no significant association in the preferred method of continuous assessment between male and female students. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted

Summary of findings

1. The mean age of the respondents was 24.8 (S.D. =3.9) years.
2. All the nursing student (mean=3.19 ± 0.29) have positive views about continuous assessment.
3. Majority (mean=3.11 ± 0.29) have positive views on the various methods/techniques of continuous assessment and those with highest mean score of 3.48 has the view that essay allow students to present their ideas as detailed as they choose so as to show some deep knowledge.
4. All the students (mean=3.21 ± 0.34) have positive view of the benefits of continuous assessment and those with highest mean believe that continuous assessment contributes positively in studentsô performance in academic evaluation and encourages students assess their performance and make amends where necessary.
5. All the students (mean=2.9 ± 0.52) encounter challenges in carrying out continuous assessment, poorly equipped library for research and other assignments received the highest score of the challenges, followed by lectures being biased in their perception of performance followed by the teacher/student ration being small.
6. All the students (mean=3.03 ± 0.59) had positive attitudes towards continuous assessment.
7. More than one quarter of the students 123(28~~23~~.3%) preferred objective test items as method of continuous assessment.
8. The studentsô view of continuous assessment has positive influence (p=0.00 < 0.05) on their attitudes towards continuous assessment

9. The studentsô class level has no influence (p=0.586 > 0.05) on their perception (views) of continuous assessment

10. There was no significant difference (p=0.183 > 0.05 in the view of continuous assessment, between male and female students.

11. There was no significant relationship (p=0.778 >0.05 in the preferred methods of continuous assessment between male and female students.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter dealt with the discussion of major findings of the study, conclusions drawn from the findings and the educational implications of the findings. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further studies were also discussed. Finally, recommendations and a brief summary of the entire work were presented.

Undergraduate Student Nurses' Views of C.A as Part of Academic Evaluation.

One of the major findings of this study was that all undergraduate student nurses have positive views about C.A.. as all the item statement in this sub-scale received a mean score above the critical scale mean of 2.5. However some items received higher mean scores than others but no item was scored below 2.5 which is critical scale mean. Majority of the students were of the view that ñScores from C.A should be added to the total score or should form part of the overall scoreò (mean=3.73, SD=0.54). They also believe that ñC.A encourages students to prepare better for their final examinationò (mean= 3.62, SD= O. 58) and ñC.A is an important tool in the evaluation of student academic performance (mean= 3.59, SD= O.64). The student with the least mean score believe that ñC.A can be a source of bias while grading the student by the teacherò (mean= 2.52, SD= 1.04); ñC.A is time wasting because many students copy others work and submit itò (mean= 2.67, SD= 1.08) and ñInadequate resources for carrying out the assignmentsò (mean=2.67, SD=1.00).

The possible explanation for the way the result came out could be that the nursing students in this study understand the importance of continuous assessment and therefore have positive perception of continuous assessment.

The findings of this study is in agreement with the study by Yigzaw,(2013) of Teachersô and studentsô perceptions, attitudes and actual practices of continuous assessment who reported that both teachers and students have positive perceptions of continuous assessment.

These findings are also in a way related to Struyven et al (2001) study on studentsô perception about assessment in higher education, he reported that studentsô perceptions about assessment have considerable influence on studentsô approaches to learning and that studentsô approaches influence the ways in which students perceive assessment. Struyven et al in their study also reported that students prefer formative assessment due to its attached feedback and

that this feedback helped them to identify the learning objectives and improve their study strategies.

Students Opinion on the Methods/Techniques Used in C.A.

Findings in Table 4 indicated that the 3 highest scored item on the undergraduate student nursesô opinion on the methods/techniques used in continuous assessment were ñEssay allows students to present their ideas as detailed as they choose so as to show some deep knowledgeò (mean= 3.48, SD= 0.70), ñ Term papers develop students skill in writing and organizationò (mean= 3.43, SD= 0.73) and ñEssay helps to improve students writing skills, such as writing speed and legibilityò (mean= 3.41, SD= 0.75).

From the table, the mean of means for the views on the various methods/techniques of C.A was 3.11 (SD= 0.29) and it was accepted. This implies that the respondents had positive views on the various methods/techniques of C.A.

The result of this study could be explained by the fact that the respondents have good knowledge of the characteristics of the various methods of continuous assessment, they believe that essay items allows student to select, organize, integrate and synthesis their answers in other to present them in their own styles and words.

The findings of this study is in agreement to a study by Struyven et al, 2002 who reported that essay type questions encourage a deep approach to learning. In contrast to the findings of the study Traub and Maccuy (2002) reported that students report more positive attitude towards MCQ and free response test on ground that these test are easier to prepare, easier to take and hold forth for higher relative score. According to them MCQ is followed by essay type exams as it encourage deep approach to learning and that objective test format encourage a surface approach to learning. Also Struyven et al 2002, in his study reported that multiple choice format exams are seen as favourable assessment methods in comparison to essay type questions.

Undergraduate students' awareness of the benefits of C.A.

From the data collected, it was observed that the respondents have positive perception of the benefits of continuous assessment and are aware of the benefits of continuous assessment as shown from the result in Table 5. Findings in Table5 indicated that the 4 highest scored items

on the students awareness of the benefits of continuous assessment subscale was ñC.A encourages students to assess their performance and make amends where necessaryò (mean= 3.40. SD= 67); ñC.A contributes positively to studentsô performance in academic evaluationò had same mean score of 3.40 (SD. 64). The result also reveal that ñC.A encourages good study habits in studentsò (mean= 3.39, SD= 0.72) and ñC.A is of immense benefits to students in the final examinationò (mean= 3.33, SD= 0.73).

From the above, one can say that students have a positive view that C.A contribute immensely in their overall academic achievement. The findings of this study could be attributed to the fact that the students have been exposed to continuous assessment and have seen that it contributed a lot to their overall result. This agrees with Entiwistle, Kozek and Tait (2005), that studentsô perceptions of school and teachers have shown positive relationship with level of motivation and approaches to learning.

This is validated by Weaver (,2006) who stated that C.A is a classroom strategy implemented by teachers to ascertain the knowledge, understanding and skills attained by learners. Bitew, (2012) in his research on the effect of implementation of C.A in practical and theoretical classes came up with the following results.

-78.13% of the students say C.A provides learners opportunities to identify their strengths and weaknesses, C.A creates conducive teaching learning environmentô, C.A helps learners to identify problems experienced in mastering of skill early enough, 83.33% of them also are of the opinion that C.A is a suitable tool for determining the progress of learners and C.A motivates learners to participate actively in their learning process.-

~~- C.A creates conducive teaching learning environmentô~~

~~- C.A helps learners to identify problems experienced in mastering of skill early enough.~~

~~- 83.33% of them also are of the opinion that C.A is a suitable tool for determining the progress of learners.~~

~~- C.A motivates learners to participate actively in their learning process.~~

Challenges Faced by Undergraduate Student Nurses in Carrying Out Continuous Assessment.

The findings shown in Table 6 indicated that the 11 items on challenges of C.A. encountered by students had means above the critical value of 2.5, the mean of means for the challenges faced by undergraduate students in carrying out continuous assessment was 2.96 (S.D. 0.52) showing that the undergraduate student nurses had challenges in carrying out C.A.

Data from table 6 shows that the students have the challenge of poorly equipped library for research and other assignments with mean score of 3.21, they are also of the opinion that the assessor may be biased in his perception of the performance of students (mean 3.17) and they are also of the view that the teacher student ratio is very small for effective implementation of C.A (mean 3.10). The challenge of poorly equipped library for research and other assignments obviously imply that the students will have problem in getting test books, journals and other materials in carrying out assignments and term papers. The students will not be able to afford the necessary books and materials needed to do a reasonable research work.

On the issue of the assessor being biased in his perception of the performance of students, it could be that the students do not have enough confidence in their assessorsô ability to be objective in their assessment of their continuous assessment. This was supported by a study by Kwawukume (2006), who pointed out that a study by WAEC in Ghana, questioned the reliability of the CA score and indicated that, generally, the continuous assessment scores were abused by some teachers who were biased in their grading of students assessment tasks. The study further established that CA scores in certain subjects obtained by some students did not have any positive linear relationship with the scores obtained in the external examinations.

The findings that ñ the teacher/student ratio is smallò, indicate that the students believe that work load on their lecturers are so much that they do not have enough time to mark their continuous assessments tasks early enough for them to do the correction before the final examination. This goes on to affect one of the features of continuous assessment, which is regular testing of students.

This findings is in agreement with Uiseb (2009) and Kapambwe (2010) who reported that overcrowded class rooms, large class size was the challenges the students expressed they encounter most in carrying out C.A. Nilesh (2014) in his study reported that the students are facing challenges in continuous assessment, which includes that some of the students reported lack of resources and financial constraints, extra workload and time constraints, problem with group work and also problem of understanding the assessment tasks as the challenges they face. This was supported by a study in South Africa by Reyneke, Meyer and

Nel (2010) who reported that the challenges faced by the students are lack of resources and materials. This is in contrast withOwolabi, and Onuka (2000) investigation on the challenges and prospects of C.A implementation in Nigeria, reported that the students have their greatest challenge in the time given to them for writing C.A paper and is closely followed by poor coverage of instructional content by the C.A tests.

Undergraduate Student Nurses' Attitudes Towards C.A.

Findings in Table 7 indicated that the 3 highest scored items on the undergraduate student nursesô attitudes towards continuous assessment subscale are ñC.A is essential in studentsô academic evaluationò (mean=3.45,SD=0.69); tallied with item 75 ñC.A should constitute part of studentsô academic evaluationò (mean= 3.45, SD=0.66) and item 76 ñC.A contributes significantly to students, performance in academic evaluationò(mean= 3.42,SD=0.71.These findings clearly emphasize that the undergraduate nurses have a positive attitudes towards continuous assessment and this could be because they perceive it as being important in their final academic evaluation.

This is in line with the views of Singh, Patel, and Desai, (2013) who reported that large proportion of the student had high positive attitudes towards continuous assessment practices. This is contrary to Sangiry, Nadkani, and Lanke (2004) views that the students (72.53%) had slightly negative attitude towards continuous assessment in general.

Undergraduate Nurses Preferred Method of Assessment.

Findings in Table 8 indicated that, 123 (28.3%) preferred objective test items, 93 (21.4%) of them preferred take home assignments and83 (19.1%) of them preferred essay items. From the above result one could say that many of the students preferred objective test items as method of continuous assessment, this could be because objective test items are easier for them to write, provides room for guessing or answering by elimination and to them this removes the issue of lecturer bias while marking. Possibility of those who have bad writing preferring objective test items is also there. On the other hand some students may prefer objective test items over essay test items because preparing for objective test gives them higher opportunity to read their books in-depth and more comprehensively.

This is in agreement with Tozoglu et al (2003) report that students showed significantly more favourable attitudes towards multiple choice test format compared to essay type format. This is also in line with Struyven et al 2002 that multiple choice format exams are seen as favourable assessment methods in comparison to essay type questions. Also according to Zeidner(2005), who clearly reported that 70% of respondents reported an overall preferences for multiple choice over essay exams.

Relationship between the students' views of continuous assessment and their attitudes towards continuous assessment.

One of the findings of this study was that there exists a significant positive relationship between the studentsô views of continuous assessment and their attitudes towards continuous assessment ($r = 0.26$, $P < 0.05$) as shown in Table 9.

This implies that studentsô views of continuous assessment influences their attitudes towards continuous assessment positively. This is to say that when the students have a positive perception of continuous assessment their attitudes towards continuous assessment will change positively, this could explain why the student in the study have positive perception of continuous assessment and positive attitudes towards continuous assessment.

Findings on Table 3 on the students views about C.A revealed that the students have positive views about C.A and this has reflected on their attitudes towards C.A as presented in table 7.

In Table 7, these items ñContinuous assessment is essential in studentsô academic evaluationò (mean = 3.45, SD = 0.69)ò; ñContinuous assessment is very essential in studentsô academic evaluationò (mean = 3.45, SD= 0.66)ò and ñContinuous assessment contributes significantly to studentsô performance in academic evaluationò (mean = 3.42, SD = 0.71)ò, clearly portrays that some students have positive attitudes towards continuous assessment.

This is in line with the view of Yigzaw (2013), that both students and teachers perception of C.A affects their attitudes towards C.A.

Differences in the perception of C.A among students in different class level.

Findings in this study revealed that there was no significant differences in the perception of C.A among students in different class level ($P > 0.05$).This implies that student class level has

no influence on their perceptions of C.A., the perception a student has of continuous assessment is not determined by the studentôs class level.

The result could be attributed to the fact that the studentsô have already formed a positive perception of continuous assessment in their previous class level and because it has been of advantage to them they did not need to have a different perception as they advance to the next class level,

Gender differences in students' perceptions of continuous assessment

Findings in this study revealed that there is no significant gender difference in the perception of continuous assessment (P>0.05).

Findings in Table 12 shows that the males have a mean of 3.15 (SD = 0.34) while the female is 3.20 (SD= 0.28). By mere observation, there is difference but when the means were further tested using t-test; hypothesis of no significant difference between the males and females was established. This implies that there is no significant difference in the gender perceptions of continuous assessment.

The result could probably be attributed to the fact that no matter the sex differences if the right knowledge of continuous assessment is inculcated, there is likelihood that positive behaviours, including positive perceptions, will be fostered.

This findings is in contrast with that of Dibu and Wole (2000) who reported that there is significant difference in male and female (gender) students perception and performance in continuous assessment test in Ijebu North secondary school.

Gender differences in students' attitudes towards C.A.

Findings from the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the attitude toward continuous assessment between male and female students.

Findings in Table 13 shows that the males had a mean of 3.06 (S.D. 0.62), while the females had 3.05 (S.D. =0.58), by mere observation there is a different between the means but when the means were further tested, hypothesis of no significance difference between the male and

female attitudes towards C.A was established. This indicates that the attitude of male and female students towards C.A. did not differ significantly.

The result of this subscale can be attributed to the fact that attitudes are formed from experience (socialization) which makes an individual to react to things in certain way. The studentsô attitudes and behavior towards academic evaluation may be influenced by the educational experience of the students and both male and female students are exposed to the same educational environment and therefore could have similar attitudes towards continuous assessment.

This finding is in agreement with Ogunfonokan (2005) who reported that there is no significant difference between male and female attitudes towards C.A. Also this is in consonant with Singh et al (2013), who reported that there is no significant different in the mean attitude towards C.A of male and female B.Ed. students. This is in contrast, to Dibu and Falayayo (2000) who reported that there is significant difference between gender (male & female) attitudes towards C.A.

Gender differences in the students' preferred method of C.A.

Findings from the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the preferred method of C.A among male and female students (P> 0.05). This implies that both male and female students have similar preference for a method of continuous assessment. This finding is suggestive that concepts are introduced in the classroom by lectures without discrimination in sexes. The study could also be suggestive that no matter the sex differences, if the right knowledge is inculcated, there is likelihood that positive behaviours, including positive attitudes will be fostered.

This result contradicts the finding of Hembree (2001) who reported that there is gender difference with males having more favourable attitudes towards the multiple choice format than females. These gender differences were attributed to a personality dimension of risk taking with females being more reluctant than males to guess multiple choice questions and one being more likely to leave items blank.

Implications of the Findings

- From the above findings, it was revealed that nursing students have a positive view on continuous assessment since it encourages students to prepare better for their final examination, is an important tool in the evaluation of student academic performances and continuous assessment is a motivator and major vehicle for learning.
- Some challenges were encountered by the student nurses such as poorly equipped library, lecturers being biased in their assessment and the ratio of teacher/student being very small. All these should be looked upon so that the objectives of learning will be achieved.
- If the teachers are adequately trained for the practice of continuous assessment, the students will be adequately assessed and evaluated.
- Sufficient educational materials are very essential for the effective and efficient implementation of continuous assessment as lack of these materials will obviously affect the implementation of continuous assessment.

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Limitations of the study

- This study is not immuned from the general limitation usually inherent in research based on the use of instruments (questionnaire) to collect data based on respondent reading before writing.
- The use of questionnaire in the study could definitely have lead to some faking of responses especially as some students would disinterestedly have filled the questionnaires.
- Time and financial constraints allowed only the use of undergraduate student nurses in other states outside Enugu State

Suggestions for further studies

- In order to validate the claims of this study, it will be necessary to determine studentsô perceptions and attitudes towards continuous assessment in nursing education in another area different from the area where this study took place since ones perception can be influenced by many factors.
- Factors militating against the use of continuous assessment for academic decision making in schools of nursing.
- A study to determine studentsô expectations preferences and attitudes towards continuous assessment.

Summary of the study

This study was carried out to determine~~reveal~~ the studentsô nursesô perception and attitudes towards continues assessment in academic evaluation. Six objectives and five hypotheses were formulated to guide the study before outlining the significance of the study.

Relevant literatures were reviewed to cover the objectives of the study. The research design was descriptive cross-sectional design. All the 435 students in the Department~~department~~ of Nursing Sciences University~~nursing sciences university~~ of Nigeria, Enugu Campus were used for this study. A questionnaire structured with the help of experts was used to collect data. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics.

After analyses, the major findings were made, thus:

- The mean age and standard deviation of the respondents was 24.8 years and 3.9 respectively.
- All the students have positive views about continuous assessment
- The students had positive views on the various methods/techniques of continuous assessment and majority with mean score of 3.48 has the view that essay allows students to present their ideas as detailed as they choose so as to show some deep knowledge.
- The students have positive perception of the benefits of continuous assessment and those with highest mean believe that continuous assessment contributes positively in studentsô performance in academic evaluation and encourages students assess their performance and make amends where necessary.
- The students encounter challenges in carrying out continuous assessment among which include poorly equipped library for research and other assignments, the lectures being biased in their perception of performance and the teacher/student ration being small being the highest challenges encountered by the students .
- The students had positive~~good~~ attitudes towards continuous assessment.
- 1 23 (28.3%) preferred objective test items as method of continuous assessment.
- The studentsô view of continuous assessment has positive influence on their attitudes towards continuous assessment.

- ❖ The studentsô class levels have no influence on their perception (views) of continuous assessment.
- ❖ There is no significant gender difference in the view of (perception) of continuous assessment.
- ❖ There was no significant relationship in the preferred methods of continuous assessment between male and female students.

Based on the findings, the conclusion is that the student nurses have positive views about continuous assessment, positive views of the methods of continuous assessment; they have the opinion that the continuous assessment is beneficial but they have some challenges in carrying out the continuous assessment. Hence the major educational implication of the study is that the Departmental library be equipped with educational materials, computers for proper documentation of continuous assessment.

Suggestions for further research are highlighted for a replication of the study in other universities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the present study, the following conclusions were made:

- That student nurses view of continuous assessment on their over all academic achievement is positive and like its continuity in nursing education.
- That the studentsô nurses perceive methods/techniques of assessment as favourable and most of them accept the methods.
- They were aware of the benefits of continuous assessment and will want continuous assessment to continue being used for their academic evaluation
- The studentsô nurses had challenges in carrying out continuous assessment which includes poorly equipped library.
- They also have positive attitudes towards continuous assessment and set continuous assessment as an essential part of their academic performance.
- Class level and gender does not have significant relationship with studentsô perception and attitudes towards continuous assessment.

Recommendations

- The Departmental library should be stocked adequately with relevant up-to-date books and journals.
- Facilities/materials like computers, effective internet connection should be made available to students.
- Conducive environment should be provided, adequate lecture rooms to reduce congestion during tests and so help in reducing malpractices
- Students should be up-dated in the new trends of events especially as regards the timing of continuous assessment
- Anxiety and workload should be reduced so as to ensure that work do not get so loaded for the students.
- Effective and timely feedback should be provided to students to reinforce learning by making the result of continuous assessment timely known to students.
- Lecturers should be up-dated in the new trends of continuous assessment e.g how to avoid being biased.
- The university should devise appropriate means for keeping records of continuous assessment results. This is to serve as an incentive for them to put in their best.
- The Department should be adequately funded since a lot of money is needed in the implementation of continuous assessment.
- The Nursing~~nursing~~ and Midwifery Council of Nigeria~~midwifery council~~ should see to the effective implementation of this policy in all the schools of Nursing~~nursing~~ and Departments~~departments~~ of Nursing.~~nursing.~~ They should ensure that the teachers have adequate qualifications, that there are adequate number of teachers in the schools and finally that the scores correctly and effectively computed and used for academic decisions regularly in all the schools.

~~**Suggestions for further studies**~~

- ~~In order to validate the claims of this study, it will be necessary to determine studentsô perceptions and attitudes towards continuous assessment in nursing education in~~

another area different from the area where this study took place since ones perception can be influenced by many factors.

- Factors militating against the use of continuous assessment for academic decision making in schools of nursing.
- A study to determine studentsô expectations preferences and attitudes towards continuous assessment.

Limitations of the study

- This study is not immuned from the general limitation usually inherent in research based on the use of instruments (questionnaire) to collect data based on respondent reading before writing.
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APPENDIX I

Department of Nursing Sciences,
Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology,
University of Nigeria,
Enugu Campus.

Dear Respondent,

1 am an M.Sc student of the above institution carrying out a research on the topic, "Nursing students' perceptions of continuous assessment in academic evaluation"

Please, kindly answer the questions below with honesty and sincerity, your information wili be treated with the greatest confidentiality it deserves and your identity will remain anonymous.

Thanks
Ezeaguba Felicia O.
(Researcher).

Section A

Demographic Data Instruction

Please tick (V) at the appropriate box provided.

1. Age: What is your age last birthday? ----------

2. Sex

(a) Male [ ]

(b) Female [ ]

3. (Marital) status:

(a) Single [ ]

(b) Married [ ]

(c) Divorced [ ]

(d) Separated [ ]

{e} Widow/Widower [ ]

4. Year of study?

(a) 2nd Year [ ]

(b) 3rd Year [ ]

(c) 4th Year [ ]

(d) 5th Year [ ]

5. Religion

(a) Christianity [ ]

{b} Muslim [ ]

(c) African Traditional Religion [ ]

d. Others, please specifyð ð ð -ð ð ð ð ð

Section B

Tick (V) in the column that depicts your choice of response.

KEY

Strongly Agree	**(SA)**	**=**	**4**
Agree	**(A)**	**=**	**3**
Disagree	**(D)**	**=**	**2**
Strongly Disagree	**(SD)**	**=**	**1**

S/N	Items	Strongly agree 4	Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly 1
	Views about Continuous Assessment (C.A.)				
6	C.A.is an important too! in the evaluation of student academic performance.				
7	C.A. encourages students to prepare better for their final examination.				
8	C.A. is an integral part of educational evaluation.				
9	C.A, reduces the anxiety that is experienced when it was only an end of course examination.				
10	C.A. improves students' participation.'				
11	C.A. provides timely knowledge of academic evaluation results which affects subsequent academic performance of students.				
12	C.A. is a motivator and a major vehicle for learning.				

13	Scores from C.A. should be added to the total score or should form part of the overall score.				
14	C.A. is a waste of time because teachers do not score them or make use of them.				
15	Time constraint is a major factor in carrying out the C.A.				
16	Inadequate resources for carrying out the assignments.				
17	C.A. is time wasting because many student copy others work and submit.				
18	C.A, can be a source of bias while grading the student by the teacher.				
	Views on the Various Methods/ techniques of Continuous Assessment.				
19	Home assignments make students to read extensively.				
20	Group presentation does not give opportunity for ail students to participate.				
21	Essay items tests student ability to supply rather than select correct answers				
22	Essay discourages guess work and encourages good study habit. -				
23	Essay allows student to present their ideas as detailed as they choose so as to show some deep knowledge.				
24	Essay helps to improve students writing skills, such as writing speed and legibility.				
25.	Essay questions do not cover the course content and the objectives as comprehensively as possible,				
26	Spelling grammatical and grammatical errors and bad writing affects students' results in essay questions.				
27	Essay scoring is not reliable (it is subjective).				
28	Performance task (practical) helps in mastering skills while carrying out procedure. :				

29	Term papers develop students' skill in writing and organization. :				
30	Term paper consume a lot of money and time				
31	Peer assessment encourages students to assess their performance and make amends where necessary.				
32	The goal of group assignment is not achieved as not aH the members of the group participate in carrying out the group work.				
33	Use of class attendance is not a very good way to assess students as the teacher may be biased in his C.A. evaluation.				
34	The observation technique of assessment is not good as it-can be teacher biased.				1
35	Objective test item are generally fair to all examinees.				
36	Multiple choice questions predominantly test basic knowledge.				
37	MCQ has a wide applicability in the measurement of various phases of achievements.				
38	MCQ is easy to score and saves time				
39	Objective test items lend themselves to guessing, especially when the test items are not skillfully developed				
40	Check list monitor and record anecdotal information.				
41	Interviews assess individual group performance				
	Perceived Benefits of Continuous Assessment.				
42	C.A. is used in diagnosing learner's strengths and needs.				
43	C.A. encourages good study habits in students.				
44	C.A. facilitates coverage of course content.				
45	C.A. provides feedback on teaching and learning,				
46	C.A. assess various components of learning				

47	C.A. is used to assess behavior and persona! development and values of students.				
48	C.A. enables students to monitor their achievements of grade level, goals and to visualize their progress towards these goals before it is too late to achieve them.				
49	C.A. contributes positively to students' performance in academic evaluation.				
50	C.A. encourages students to assess their performance and make amends where necessary.				
51	C.A. leads to individual skill acquisition.				
52	C.A. is done to monitor the progress of learning.				
53	C.A. is of immense benefits to students in the final examination.				
54	C.A. provides prediction of performance on the end of year examination.				
55	C.A. improves students' participation in class.				
56	C.A. is used for guidance and counseling purposes. .				
57	C.A. gives room for creativity.				
58	C.A. provides basis for instructional placements.				
59	C.A. guides instructions.				
60	C.A. helps in proper evaluation of the curriculum.				
61	C.A. helps the teacher to assess her instructional materials and methods from time to time.				
	Challenges of Continuous Assessment Encountered by Students				
62	Enough time is not given to students to do their homework and term paper.				
63	Difficulty in meeting up with the financial demands of C.A.			'	

64	The assessor may be biased in his perception of the performance of students.				
65	Poorly equipped library for research and other assignments				
66	The teacher student ratio is very small.				
67	C.A. is more stressful than summative assessment				
68	There is malpractice during tests and assignments.				
69	C.A. is not well planned or organized as so many assignments come at the same time				
70	The class size is large for the teacher to carryout effective student evaluation by C.A.				
71	Lectures lack technical knowledge on how to design valid C.A.				
72	Teachers are not updated on the current techniques of C.A.				
	Attitude Towards Continuous Assessment.				
73	C.A. is essential in students' academic evaluation.				
74	C.A. scores should not be used in calculating students' final scores in academic evaluation.				
75	C.A. should constitute part of students' academic evaluation.				
76	C.A. contributes significantly to students' performance in academic evaluation.				
77	C.A. is a mere waste of time.				
78	1 very much welcome C.A.				
79	C.A. should be removed from educational evaluation.				
80	I don't like C.A.				
81	C.A- are not scored by lecturers most of the time and so why bother students.				

Students' Preferred method of continuous assessment,

82. Which method of continuous assessment do you prefer most?

a) Test (essay items) [ ]

b) Tests (objective items) [ ].

c) Term paper [ ]

d) Class presentation [ ]

e) Group work/assignment [ ]

f) Take home assignments [ ]

g) Observations [ ]

h) Peer assessment [ ]

i) Class discussion [ ]

j} Portfolio [ ]

Thanks for participating in the study.

APPENDIX II
INFORMED CONSENT

Introduction: My name is Ezeaguba Felicia, a postgraduate student of the Department of Nursing Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus.

Voluntary nature of **Participation:** Subjects* participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the study at any given time.

Study **Procedure:** I am carrying out a study on Nursing Students' Perception and Attitudes Towards Continuous Assessment in Academic Evaluation. In this study, you will be required to fill the questionnaire. Please feel free to ask for clarification on any question you do not understand.

Risk: The process of filling the questionnaire will not cause you any harm or injury.

Confidentially: Please, note that information you give will be kept confidential and your name will never be used in connection with any information you give.

Feed **Back:** In case of any clarification, you can contact me on

Response: The study has been explained to me and I finally understand the consent of the study process. I will be willing to participate in the study described above.

Signature of Participation	Signature of Witness	Signature of Researcher
Date	Date	Date

In case of enquiries, please contact;
Dr. (Mrs.) NJP. Ogbonnaya,
Department of Nursing Sciences and technology,
Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology,
University of Nigeria,
Enugu Campus

APPENDIX III

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING SCIENCES
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES & TECHNOLOGY
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

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Enugu Campus
Enugu State, Nigeria
dnsunec@gmail.com

Your Ref: .....

Our Ref: UN/CM/DNS/90 *Date:* .....

HEAD: UCHENNA V. OKOLIE, PhD, RPHN, RN, RM, FWACN

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

IDENTIFICATION LETTER

RE: EZEAGUBA PELICIA O

REG NO: PG/M.Sc/07/46838

This is to certify that the bearer of this letter is a student of Department of Nursing Sciences' faculty of Health Sciences and Technology, College of Medicine, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus.

Kindly allow him/her to carry out Research in your department.

Thank you.

for Dr (Mrs) Uche Okolie
Head of Department

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING SCIENCES
OFFICE OF THE HEAD
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA ENUGU

APPENDIX IV

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA TEACHING HOSPITAL

ITUKU- OZALLA, P.M.B. 01129, ENUGU

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Chairman Medical Advisory Committee

Our Ref.....UNTH/CSA,329/VOL.5

Date.....19th June, 2014

NHREC/05/01/2008B-FWA00002458-1RB00002323

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

TOPIC: NURSING STUDENTS' PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN ACADEMIC EVALUATION

BY: **EZEAGUBA, FELICIA O.**

FOR: A DISSERTATION FOR A MASTERS DEGREE IN NURSING SCIENCES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NURSING SCIENCES, FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES & TECHNOLOGY, COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

This research project on the above topic was reviewed and approved by the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Health Research Ethics Committee.
This certificate is valid for **one year** from date of issue.

Prof. R.E. Umeh
Chairman, Health Research Ethics Committee

Date: 18/07/14