

Assessing The Effectiveness of Continuous Assessment Practices in Enhancing Pupils' Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Kenema City, Sierra Leone

Mustapha Ansumana¹, Edward Lamin Junior Monya², Amara Ansumana³

^{1,2,3} Department of Mathematics Eastern Technical University, Sierra Leone (ETU/SL)

²Department of Mathematics & Statistics, Njala University, Sierra Leone

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1307000005>

Received: 05 July 2026; Accepted: 10 July 2026; Published: 22 July 2026

ABSTRACT

This study assessed the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices in enhancing pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools in Kenema City, Sierra Leone. The research focused on three selected secondary schools: Government Secondary School Kenema, Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema. The primary objective was to examine how continuous assessment practices contribute to improving pupils' academic achievement and to identify the challenges affecting their effective implementation.

A descriptive survey research design was adopted, targeting teachers and pupils from the selected schools. A sample of 100 respondents, comprising 40 teachers and 60 pupils, was selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, while qualitative responses were analyzed thematically.

The findings revealed that continuous assessment practices are widely implemented in the selected secondary schools, with class tests (37.5%) and assignments/homework (25%) being the most commonly used assessment methods. The study further established that most teachers conduct assessments regularly, with 45% administering class tests weekly and 30% conducting them twice monthly. Results indicated that continuous assessment positively influences pupils' academic achievement, as 86.7% of pupils reported improved understanding of subjects, while 90% stated that continuous assessment motivates regular study habits.

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges affecting effective implementation were identified, including excessive assessment workload (50%), delays in releasing results (33.3%), unclear grading systems (25%), limited use of diverse assessment techniques, and delayed feedback mechanisms.

The study concluded that continuous assessment significantly contributes to enhancing pupils' academic achievement by promoting regular learning, improving understanding, and encouraging continuous study habits. However, its effectiveness depends on proper implementation, timely feedback, and the use of varied assessment methods. Recommendations include diversifying assessment strategies, establishing clear grading guidelines, providing timely feedback, and strengthening teacher professional development in educational measurement and evaluation.

Keywords: Continuous assessment, academic achievement, secondary schools, assessment practices, Kenema City, Sierra Leone

INTRODUCTION

Assessment constitutes a core component of the teaching and learning process and plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of educational delivery and learners' academic progress. Traditionally, assessment

in many education systems relied heavily on summative examinations conducted at the end of a term or academic year. However, this approach has increasingly been criticized for its inability to provide a comprehensive and continuous picture of learners' academic development. Consequently, modern educational reforms have emphasized the adoption of continuous assessment (CA) as a more holistic and learner-centered approach to evaluating pupils' academic achievement (Harlen, 2019).

Continuous assessment refers to the systematic and ongoing evaluation of pupils' learning through various assessment techniques, including quizzes, assignments, class tests, projects, practical exercises, presentations, and classroom participation over a given period. Unlike one-off examinations, continuous assessment allows teachers to monitor pupils' progress consistently and make informed instructional decisions based on learners' strengths and weaknesses (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Research has demonstrated that when continuous assessment is effectively implemented, it enhances learning outcomes by promoting regular study habits, active classroom engagement, and timely feedback (OECD, 2021).

Globally, continuous assessment has become an essential component of education systems aimed at improving academic achievement and reducing the limitations associated with high-stakes examinations. Studies conducted in both developed and developing countries indicate that continuous assessment improves pupils' motivation, reduces test anxiety, and encourages deeper understanding of subject matter rather than rote memorization (Brown & Knight, 2020; Andrade & Brookhart, 2021). Furthermore, continuous assessment supports formative learning by enabling teachers to adjust instructional strategies to meet pupils' learning needs.

In the African context, continuous assessment has been adopted as part of broader educational reforms aimed at improving the quality of education and aligning assessment practices with competency-based curricula. Countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Sierra Leone have integrated continuous assessment into their secondary school systems to ensure that learners are assessed across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Adeyemi, 2020; Komba & Mwandanji, 2020). Despite its recognized importance, the implementation of continuous assessment in many African schools faces significant challenges, including large class sizes, limited teaching and learning resources, inadequate teacher training, and weak monitoring mechanisms.

In Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) has emphasized continuous assessment as a key strategy for improving teaching effectiveness and pupils' academic achievement at the secondary school level. According to the national curriculum framework, continuous assessment is intended to form an integral part of pupils' overall evaluation and contribute substantially to their final grades (MBSSE, 2022). The policy rationale behind continuous assessment is to ensure fairness, consistency, and inclusivity in assessing pupils' learning outcomes, while also providing opportunities for continuous feedback and remediation.

At the secondary school level, continuous assessment is particularly important because it coincides with a critical stage of learners' academic and cognitive development. Secondary school pupils are expected to develop higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and independent learning habits. Continuous assessment supports these expectations by encouraging sustained academic engagement and discouraging last-minute examination preparation (Yusuf & Afolayan, 2021). Moreover, continuous assessment allows teachers to track pupils' progress over time and identify learning gaps early enough for corrective intervention.

In Kenema City, secondary schools such as Government Secondary School Kenema, Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema have adopted continuous assessment as part of their instructional and evaluation practices. These schools represent diverse educational settings, including public, mission, and faith-based institutions, making them suitable for evaluating variations in continuous assessment practices. Despite the adoption of continuous assessment, concerns persist regarding its effective implementation and its actual contribution to pupils' academic achievement.

Evidence from previous studies suggests that in many secondary schools, continuous assessment is often inadequately implemented due to factors such as heavy teacher workload, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient assessment materials, and limited professional development opportunities for teachers (Komba & Mwandanji, 2020; OECD, 2021). In some cases, teachers rely predominantly on written tests while neglecting other

assessment techniques such as projects, practical work, and classroom participation, which undermines the comprehensive nature of continuous assessment (Adeyemi, 2020).

Furthermore, challenges such as inconsistent assessment schedules, delayed feedback, poor record-keeping, and lack of standardized assessment criteria may negatively affect pupils' learning experiences and academic performance. Pupils who do not receive timely and constructive feedback may struggle to identify their weaknesses and improve their academic outcomes (Andrade & Brookhart, 2021). These issues raise critical concerns about whether continuous assessment practices in the selected secondary schools in Kenema City are effectively enhancing pupils' academic achievement or merely serving as a formal requirement. Despite the recognized importance of continuous assessment, there is limited empirical research focusing specifically on how continuous assessment practices affect pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools in Kenema City. Most existing studies are either national in scope or focused on other regions, leaving a gap in localized evidence that reflects the realities of schools in Kenema. Understanding how continuous assessment is practiced in Government Secondary School Kenema, Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema is therefore essential for improving assessment practices and academic outcomes.

Against this background, this study seeks to evaluate continuous assessment practices and examine their effect on pupils' academic achievement in selected secondary schools in Kenema City. By assessing the nature, frequency, and effectiveness of continuous assessment practices, the study aims to provide empirical evidence that can inform teachers, school administrators, and policy makers on how to strengthen assessment strategies and improve pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Continuous assessment was introduced in secondary schools to improve teaching effectiveness and enhance pupils' academic achievement through continuous monitoring and evaluation. However, despite its widespread adoption, pupils' academic performance in many secondary schools in Kenema City remains a major concern to educators, parents, and education stakeholders. Reports of poor examination results and declining academic standards suggest that the potential benefits of continuous assessment may not be fully realized. In some secondary schools, continuous assessment is reportedly treated as a routine administrative requirement rather than a meaningful instructional tool. Teachers may rely heavily on written tests while neglecting other important assessment techniques such as projects, practical activities, and classroom participation (Yusuf & Afolayan, 2021). Additionally, inadequate record-keeping, lack of standardized assessment criteria, and insufficient feedback to pupils may limit the effectiveness of continuous assessment in improving academic performance.

In Government Secondary School Kenema, Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema, inconsistencies in the application of continuous assessment have raised concerns about fairness, reliability, and effectiveness. Pupils often complain of delayed marking of assignments, unclear grading systems, and irregular assessment schedules, which may negatively affect their motivation and academic achievement. Despite these challenges, there is limited empirical research specifically examining the effect of continuous assessment practices on pupils' academic achievement in these selected schools. The problem, therefore, lies in the lack of adequate evaluation of continuous assessment practices and their actual impact on pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools in Kenema City. This study seeks to address this gap by systematically assessing continuous assessment practices and determining their effect on pupils' academic achievement in the selected schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate continuous assessment practices and examine their effect on pupils' academic achievement in selected secondary schools in Kenema City.

Aims of the Study

The main aim of the study is to assess the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices in enhancing pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools in Kenema City.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the types of continuous assessment practices used in Government Secondary School Kenema, Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema.
2. Determine the frequency with which continuous assessment activities are conducted in the selected schools.
3. Assess teachers' competence and preparedness in implementing continuous assessment practices.
4. Examine the effect of continuous assessment practices on pupils' academic achievement.
5. Identify challenges affecting the effective implementation of continuous assessment in the selected secondary schools.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of continuous assessment practices are used in the selected secondary schools in Kenema City?
2. How frequently are continuous assessment activities conducted in the selected schools?
3. How competent are teachers in implementing continuous assessment practices?
4. What effect do continuous assessment practices have on pupils' academic achievement?
5. What challenges affect the effective implementation of continuous assessment in the selected secondary schools?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be of great significance to various stakeholders in the education sector. Teachers will benefit from the study by gaining insights into effective continuous assessment practices that can improve pupils' academic achievement. School administrators will use the findings to strengthen supervision and ensure consistency in assessment practices across subjects. Policy makers, particularly the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), will benefit from the study by using the findings to review and improve policies related to continuous assessment implementation in secondary schools (MBSSE, 2022). Pupils will benefit indirectly through improved assessment practices that promote regular feedback, fairness, and enhanced learning outcomes. The study will also contribute to existing academic literature and serve as a reference for future researchers on assessment practices and academic achievement in Sierra Leone.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on evaluating continuous assessment practices and their effect on pupils' academic achievement in three selected secondary schools in Kenema City: Government Secondary School Kenema, Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema. The study involves teachers and pupils at the secondary school level. However, the study may face limitations such as time constraints, limited access to accurate academic records, and possible bias in respondents' responses. Financial limitations may also affect the sample size and data collection process.

Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited to three selected secondary schools in Kenema City and does not include private secondary schools or schools outside the study area. It focuses solely on continuous assessment practices and their effect

on pupils' academic achievement, excluding other variables such as home background and socio-economic factors.

Operational Definition of Terms

Continuous Assessment: A systematic and ongoing evaluation of pupils' academic performance using tests, assignments, projects, quizzes, and classroom participation over a period of time (Harlen, 2019).

Academic Achievement: The level of pupils' academic performance measured through continuous assessment records and examination results.

Assessment Practices: The methods and procedures used by teachers to evaluate pupils' learning progress.

Pupils: Learners enrolled in secondary schools participating in the study.

Secondary School: An institution that provides formal education to pupils after primary education and before tertiary education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of related literature on the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices in enhancing pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools. The review provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how continuous assessment contributes to teaching and learning outcomes, particularly within the context of secondary education in Kenema City.

The chapter examines existing scholarly works, policy documents, and empirical studies that explain the concept, application, and impact of continuous assessment on pupils' academic performance. Continuous assessment has increasingly been recognized as an essential component of modern educational evaluation because it promotes ongoing monitoring of learners' progress, encourages active participation in classroom activities, and provides timely feedback that supports academic improvement.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study explains in a systematic manner how continuous assessment practices influence pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools in Kenema City. It establishes the relationships among the key variables of the study and provides a logical structure for understanding how continuous assessment contributes to improved learning outcomes when properly implemented. The framework is grounded in educational assessment principles and aligned with the objectives of evaluating the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices in enhancing pupils' academic achievement.

In this study, continuous assessment practices constitute the independent variable, while pupils' academic achievement represents the dependent variable. The framework further incorporates intervening variables that may mediate or moderate the relationship between these two main variables. These intervening factors include teachers' competence, availability of instructional and assessment resources, school administrative support, class size, feedback mechanisms, and pupils' motivation.

Continuous assessment practices refer to the systematic and ongoing evaluation of pupils' learning through various assessment methods such as quizzes, assignments, class tests, projects, practical work, presentations, and classroom participation. Unlike summative assessment, which is conducted at the end of an instructional period, continuous assessment is integrated into the teaching and learning process and provides regular information about pupils' academic progress (Harlen, 2019). According to Black and Wiliam (2018), continuous assessment enhances learning by allowing teachers to monitor pupils' understanding continuously and adjust instructional strategies to address identified learning gaps.

Within the conceptual framework, the nature and quality of continuous assessment practices are critical. Effective continuous assessment is characterized by regularity, fairness, diversity of assessment techniques, and

alignment with learning objectives. When teachers employ a variety of assessment methods, pupils are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Brown & Knight, 2020). This multidimensional approach to assessment ensures that pupils' academic achievement is not judged solely on examination performance but on sustained learning over time.

The framework assumes that frequency of assessment plays a significant role in enhancing academic achievement. Regular assessment activities encourage consistent study habits, reduce procrastination, and promote continuous engagement with learning materials (Yusuf & Afolayan, 2021). Pupils who are assessed frequently are more likely to remain academically focused and motivated, which positively influences their performance. Conversely, irregular or poorly planned continuous assessment may fail to support learning and could negatively affect pupils' academic outcomes.

Another important component of the conceptual framework is feedback, which acts as a key mechanism linking continuous assessment practices to academic achievement. Feedback enables pupils to understand their strengths and weaknesses and provides guidance on how to improve performance. Research indicates that timely and constructive feedback enhances learning more effectively than assessment scores alone (Andrade & Brookhart, 2021). In the framework, feedback is viewed as a mediating process through which continuous assessment influences academic achievement. Where feedback is delayed, unclear, or absent, the positive impact of continuous assessment on learning may be significantly reduced.

The conceptual framework also recognizes teachers' competence in assessment as a crucial intervening variable. Teachers' knowledge of assessment techniques, ability to design valid and reliable assessment tools, and skills in record-keeping and feedback provision directly affect the effectiveness of continuous assessment (Adeyemi, 2020). Teachers who are well trained in measurement and evaluation are more likely to implement continuous assessment effectively, thereby enhancing pupils' academic achievement. In contrast, inadequate teacher training may result in overreliance on written tests and poor assessment practices, limiting the benefits of continuous assessment.

School-related factors are also incorporated into the framework as intervening variables. These include school administrative support, availability of instructional and assessment materials, class size, and monitoring mechanisms. Supportive school administration ensures that continuous assessment policies are properly implemented and that teachers are supervised and guided in assessment practices. In Sierra Leone, continuous assessment is a key component of secondary school evaluation as emphasized by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, which requires schools to integrate continuous assessment into pupils' final grades (MBSSE, 2022). However, inadequate resources and large class sizes may constrain teachers' ability to conduct effective continuous assessment, thereby weakening its impact on academic achievement.

Pupils' motivation and attitude toward learning are also important intervening variables within the conceptual framework. Continuous assessment has been shown to improve pupils' motivation by reducing examination anxiety and providing regular opportunities for success (OECD, 2021). When pupils perceive assessment as fair and supportive, they are more likely to engage actively in learning activities and strive for academic improvement. On the other hand, poorly implemented assessment practices may demotivate pupils and negatively influence their academic performance.

At the outcome level, pupils' academic achievement is reflected in improved test scores, better understanding of subject matter, enhanced classroom participation, and overall academic progress. The framework assumes a positive relationship between effective continuous assessment practices and academic achievement, provided that intervening variables are adequately addressed. Empirical studies consistently support this assumption, indicating that well-implemented continuous assessment contributes significantly to improved learning outcomes in secondary schools (Black & Wiliam, 2018; Brown & Knight, 2020).

In summary, the conceptual framework of this study illustrates that continuous assessment practices influence pupils' academic achievement through a complex interaction of assessment methods, feedback processes, teacher competence, school support, and pupil-related factors. The framework underscores the importance of not only adopting continuous assessment but also ensuring its effective implementation. By applying this framework to

secondary schools in Kenema City, the study seeks to generate empirical evidence on how continuous assessment practices can be strengthened to enhance pupils' academic achievement and improve the overall quality of education.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study provides an academic foundation for understanding how continuous assessment practices influence pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools. The framework is anchored on well-established educational theories that explain learning, assessment, and performance improvement. Specifically, the study is guided by Constructivist Learning Theory, Formative Assessment Theory, and Feedback Theory. These theories collectively explain the mechanisms through which continuous assessment enhances pupils' learning outcomes and academic achievement.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with learning experiences rather than passively receiving information from teachers. The theory is closely associated with scholars such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, who emphasized that learning is an active, cognitive, and social process. According to Piaget, learners develop understanding by assimilating and accommodating new information based on prior knowledge, while Vygotsky emphasized the role of social interaction and guided learning in cognitive development.

Continuous assessment strongly aligns with constructivist principles because it engages pupils in continuous learning activities such as assignments, projects, class tests, presentations, and classroom participation. These activities encourage pupils to think critically, apply knowledge, and reflect on their learning progress. Rather than relying solely on end-of-term examinations, continuous assessment provides multiple opportunities for pupils to demonstrate understanding over time (Harlen, 2019).

From a constructivist perspective, continuous assessment enhances pupils' academic achievement by promoting learner-centered instruction. When pupils actively engage in assessment tasks, they develop deeper understanding and long-term retention of subject matter. Research indicates that learners who are regularly assessed through diverse methods tend to perform better academically than those evaluated mainly through summative examinations (Brown & Knight, 2020).

In the context of secondary schools in Kenema City, constructivist theory suggests that effective continuous assessment practices enable pupils to take ownership of their learning, improve problem-solving skills, and develop higher-order cognitive abilities. This theoretical perspective supports the assumption that continuous assessment, when properly implemented, contributes significantly to improved academic achievement.

Formative Assessment Theory

Formative Assessment Theory emphasizes assessment as a tool for improving learning rather than merely measuring learning outcomes. The theory views assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process, providing continuous information that guides instructional decisions and learner improvement. Scholars argue that formative assessment is most effective when it is embedded in classroom activities and used to monitor learners' progress (Black & Wiliam, 2018).

Continuous assessment is inherently formative in nature because it involves ongoing evaluation of pupils' learning throughout the academic period. Through quizzes, assignments, and class activities, teachers are able to identify learning difficulties early and adjust instructional strategies accordingly. Pupils also benefit from formative assessment by gaining awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, which motivates improvement and academic growth (Andrade & Brookhart, 2021).

Formative Assessment Theory explains how continuous assessment practices improve academic achievement by promoting continuous learning rather than examination-oriented learning. Studies show that pupils exposed to formative assessment practices demonstrate improved understanding, increased motivation, and higher

academic performance (OECD, 2021). This theory is particularly relevant to secondary education, where pupils are expected to develop independent learning skills and sustained academic engagement.

In Sierra Leone, the emphasis on continuous assessment by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education reflects the principles of formative assessment. However, the effectiveness of continuous assessment depends largely on how well teachers implement formative strategies such as timely feedback, remediation, and differentiated instruction. Formative Assessment Theory therefore provides a strong theoretical justification for examining the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices in secondary schools in Kenema City.

Feedback Theory

Feedback Theory highlights the critical role of feedback in enhancing learning and academic performance. Feedback refers to information provided to learners about their performance relative to learning objectives, with the aim of guiding improvement. According to educational theorists, feedback is most effective when it is timely, specific, and constructive (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Continuous assessment provides a structured platform for regular feedback between teachers and pupils. Through marked assignments, class tests, and project evaluations, teachers communicate pupils' learning progress and areas requiring improvement. Effective feedback enables pupils to correct mistakes, refine understanding, and adopt better learning strategies (Andrade & Brookhart, 2021).

Feedback Theory explains that pupils who receive consistent and meaningful feedback are more likely to improve academically than those who receive feedback only at the end of a term or academic year. Delayed or inadequate feedback, on the other hand, may reduce motivation and hinder academic progress. Empirical evidence shows that feedback associated with continuous assessment significantly improves pupils' academic achievement and learning engagement (OECD, 2021).

In secondary schools in Kenema City, challenges such as large class sizes and heavy teacher workload may limit the quality of feedback provided to pupils. Feedback Theory therefore underscores the importance of examining how continuous assessment feedback is delivered and how it influences pupils' academic achievement in the selected schools.

Relevance of the Theoretical Framework to the Study

The integration of Constructivist Learning Theory, Formative Assessment Theory, and Feedback Theory provides a comprehensive explanation of how continuous assessment practices influence pupils' academic achievement. Constructivist theory emphasizes active learning and learner engagement, formative assessment theory highlights continuous monitoring and instructional adjustment, while feedback theory focuses on performance improvement through guidance and correction. Together, these theories justify the assumption that effective continuous assessment practices—supported by competent teachers, timely feedback, and appropriate learning environments—enhance pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools. The theoretical framework therefore guides the design, analysis, and interpretation of this study by explaining the expected relationship between continuous assessment practices and pupils' academic achievement in selected secondary schools in Kenema City.

Empirical Studies

This section reviews empirical studies related to continuous assessment practices and pupils' academic achievement, with emphasis on implementation, frequency, teachers' competence, effects on achievement, and challenges. The review draws from global, African, and Sierra Leonean contexts to provide a comprehensive understanding of existing evidence and to identify research gaps relevant to secondary schools in Kenema City.

Empirical Studies on Continuous Assessment Practices in Secondary Schools

Empirical evidence across different educational systems indicates that continuous assessment is widely adopted as a strategy for improving teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes. Studies conducted in both developed

and developing countries show that common continuous assessment practices include quizzes, assignments, class tests, projects, presentations, and classroom participation (Harlen, 2019; Brown & Knight, 2020). These assessment methods are designed to capture pupils' learning progress over time and provide a broader evaluation of academic performance beyond final examinations.

Black and Wiliam (2018) found that secondary schools that employed diverse continuous assessment methods recorded better learning outcomes than those that relied mainly on summative tests. Their study emphasized that varied assessment techniques allow teachers to assess different learning domains and provide more accurate judgments of pupils' academic abilities. Similarly, Andrade and Brookhart (2021) reported that continuous assessment practices promote learner engagement and accountability when pupils are regularly involved in assessment activities.

In African secondary schools, studies suggest that although continuous assessment is officially integrated into school systems, its implementation is often inconsistent. Adeyemi (2020) observed that many teachers rely heavily on written tests due to time constraints and large class sizes, thereby neglecting practical and project-based assessments. This narrow application reduces the effectiveness of continuous assessment and limits its potential to enhance pupils' academic achievement.

In Sierra Leone, continuous assessment has been institutionalized under policies of the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, which mandates that continuous assessment should contribute significantly to pupils' final grades (MBSSE, 2022). However, empirical studies suggest that implementation varies across schools, with some teachers treating continuous assessment as a routine administrative exercise rather than a formative instructional tool.

Empirical Studies on Frequency of Continuous Assessment

The frequency with which continuous assessment is conducted has been identified as a critical factor influencing pupils' academic achievement. Empirical studies show that regular assessment encourages continuous learning, improves retention, and prevents academic complacency (Yusuf & Afolayan, 2021). Pupils who are frequently assessed tend to develop consistent study habits and remain academically engaged throughout the term.

A study by Komba and Mwandangi (2020) in Tanzanian secondary schools revealed that schools with well-structured and regular continuous assessment schedules recorded significantly higher academic performance than schools with irregular assessment practices. The study concluded that frequent assessment provides timely information for instructional adjustment and learner support.

Similarly, OECD (2021) reported that frequent formative assessments are associated with improved learning outcomes, particularly when assessment results are used to inform teaching and provide feedback. In contrast, infrequent assessments often lead to poor preparation and increased examination anxiety among pupils.

In the context of Kenema City, anecdotal evidence suggests that while some secondary schools conduct continuous assessments regularly, others do so sporadically due to workload pressures and limited instructional time. This inconsistency may partly explain variations in pupils' academic achievement across schools.

Empirical Studies on Teachers' Competence in Continuous Assessment

Teacher competence plays a pivotal role in the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices. Empirical studies consistently indicate that teachers' knowledge of assessment principles, skills in test construction, and ability to provide feedback significantly influence pupils' academic outcomes (Brown & Knight, 2020).

Research conducted in Nigerian secondary schools showed that teachers who received professional training in measurement and evaluation were more effective in implementing continuous assessment and recorded better pupil performance (Adeyemi, 2020). Conversely, teachers with limited assessment literacy often struggled with designing valid assessment tools and maintaining accurate records.

Komba and Mwandanji (2020) further reported that inadequate training in assessment techniques remains a major challenge in many African secondary schools. Teachers often lack exposure to alternative assessment methods such as projects and portfolios, which limits the scope of continuous assessment.

In Sierra Leone, studies indicate that while teachers are aware of continuous assessment policies, many lack sufficient professional development opportunities to implement them effectively (MBSSE, 2022). This gap in teacher competence may reduce the impact of continuous assessment on pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools.

Empirical Studies on the Effect of Continuous Assessment on Academic Achievement

Numerous empirical studies establish a positive relationship between continuous assessment practices and pupils' academic achievement. Black and Wiliam (2018) demonstrated that formative assessment practices significantly improve learning outcomes when integrated into daily classroom activities. Their findings suggest that continuous assessment helps pupils understand learning expectations and track their academic progress.

International studies supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development indicate that pupils exposed to continuous and formative assessment perform better academically than those assessed mainly through end-of-term examinations (OECD, 2021). Continuous assessment has also been found to reduce test anxiety and promote deeper understanding of subject matter.

In African contexts, Yusuf and Afolayan (2021) found that continuous assessment positively influenced pupils' academic achievement by encouraging regular study habits and improving classroom participation. Similarly, Adeyemi (2020) reported that pupils assessed continuously showed higher academic performance than those evaluated predominantly through summative tests.

These findings suggest that when continuous assessment is effectively implemented, it serves as a powerful tool for enhancing pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools.

Empirical Studies on Challenges in Implementing Continuous Assessment

Despite the documented benefits of continuous assessment, empirical studies highlight several challenges affecting its effective implementation. Large class sizes, heavy teacher workload, inadequate teaching and learning resources, and insufficient assessment materials are frequently cited challenges (OECD, 2021).

Delayed marking and feedback have also been identified as major barriers. Andrade and Brookhart (2021) noted that pupils who do not receive timely feedback are less likely to benefit from continuous assessment. Poor record-keeping and lack of standardized assessment criteria further undermine the reliability and fairness of assessment outcomes.

In Sierra Leone, studies suggest that limited supervision and monitoring of assessment practices contribute to inconsistencies in continuous assessment implementation across schools (MBSSE, 2022). These challenges highlight the need for context-specific studies to assess how continuous assessment practices affect pupils' academic achievement at the local level.

Appraisal of the Reviewed Literature

The reviewed literature demonstrates that continuous assessment is a vital tool for enhancing pupils' academic achievement when properly implemented. Theoretical perspectives emphasize active learning, formative assessment, and feedback as key mechanisms through which continuous assessment influences academic outcomes. Empirical studies further confirm a positive relationship between continuous assessment practices and pupils' academic performance.

However, most existing studies are either generalized or conducted outside the specific context of Kenema City. There is limited localized empirical evidence examining how continuous assessment practices affect pupils'

academic achievement in Government Secondary School Kenema, Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema.

Furthermore, while many studies highlight the benefits of continuous assessment, fewer studies provide detailed analysis of implementation challenges within specific school environments. This gap underscores the need for the present study, which seeks to evaluate continuous assessment practices and their effect on pupils' academic achievement in selected secondary schools in Kenema City.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered most suitable because it allows the researcher to collect data from a selected group of respondents in order to describe existing practices, opinions, attitudes, and conditions as they occur naturally. The descriptive survey design enabled the researcher to examine how continuous assessment practices are implemented in secondary schools and how such practices influence pupils' academic achievement without manipulating any variables.

The design was also appropriate because it facilitated the use of questionnaires to gather data from both teachers and pupils, thereby providing a broad understanding of continuous assessment practices from multiple perspectives. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, the research design ensured comprehensive analysis and interpretation of findings.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Kenema City, located in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone. Kenema City is an important educational and administrative center with a wide range of secondary schools operating under different management structures. The selected schools for the study were Government Secondary School Kenema, Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema. These schools were chosen because they represent public, mission, and faith-based institutions respectively, and they have fully implemented continuous assessment as required by national education policy. The schools also have diverse pupil populations, making them appropriate for examining variations in assessment practices and their impact on academic achievement.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all teachers and pupils in the selected secondary schools. Teachers formed part of the population because they are directly responsible for planning, administering, and grading continuous assessment activities. Pupils were included because they are the direct beneficiaries of continuous assessment and their academic achievement reflects the effectiveness of such practices. The target population specifically included subject teachers and pupils at the junior and senior secondary levels who are actively involved in continuous assessment activities such as tests, assignments, quizzes, projects, and class participation.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample was selected from the population to make the study manageable and cost-effective. The study employed both purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers who were directly involved in continuous assessment practices. This ensured that only respondents with adequate knowledge and experience in assessment were included. Simple random sampling was used to select pupils, giving every pupil an equal chance of being selected. This combination of sampling techniques helped to minimize bias and improve the representativeness of the sample.

Sample Size

The sample size for the study consisted of 100 respondents, comprising 40 teachers and 60 pupils drawn from the three selected secondary schools. The sample size was considered adequate to generate reliable data and

allow meaningful analysis while remaining feasible within the available time and resources. The distribution of respondents across the schools ensured fair representation.

Instrument for Data Collection

The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to collect information related to continuous assessment practices and pupils' academic achievement. It consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

The closed-ended questions were used to obtain quantitative data on the types, frequency, and effectiveness of continuous assessment practices, while the open-ended questions allowed respondents to express their views and experiences in detail. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering demographic information, assessment practices, teacher competence, challenges, and perceived effects on academic achievement.

Validation

To ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the research instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to expert validation. The instrument was reviewed by lecturers in the Department of Measurement and Evaluation and experienced secondary school teachers. Their suggestions helped to improve the wording, structure, and relevance of the items. Corrections were made before final administration of the questionnaire.

Validity of the Instrument

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. In this study, content validity was ensured by carefully aligning questionnaire items with the research objectives and research questions. Each item was examined to ensure it adequately reflected continuous assessment practices and academic achievement. Ambiguous and irrelevant questions were removed to enhance clarity and accuracy.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the consistency of the research instrument. To ensure reliability, a pilot test was conducted using respondents from a secondary school outside the study area. The responses obtained were analyzed to identify inconsistencies and unclear items. Necessary adjustments were made before administering the final questionnaire to ensure consistent and dependable results.

Sources of Data

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected directly from teachers and pupils using questionnaires. Secondary data were obtained from textbooks, academic journals, school records, policy documents, and other relevant literature related to continuous assessment and academic achievement.

Procedure for Data Collection

Permission was sought from school authorities before data collection commenced. After approval, the researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents. Clear instructions were given, and respondents were assured of confidentiality. Adequate time was provided for completion, after which the questionnaires were collected to ensure a high response rate.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Responses were coded and organized into tables. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize respondents' views and present findings clearly in line with the research questions.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses were grouped into themes such as feedback mechanisms, assessment challenges, and pupils' learning experiences. This approach provided deeper insights and supported the quantitative findings.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using simple statistical tools such as frequency counts and percentages. This method allowed for easy comparison of responses across schools and helped determine the overall effectiveness of continuous assessment practices on pupils' academic achievement.

Ethical Consideration / Research Ethics / Ethical Issues

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by avoiding the use of names on questionnaires. All information collected was used strictly for academic purposes, and respondents were treated with respect throughout the research process.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter presents and critically analyzes the data collected from 100 respondents, comprising 40 teachers and 60 pupils as specified in Chapter Three. The analysis follows the structure of the questionnaire and interprets the statistical findings in direct relation to the study topic: Assessing the Effectiveness of Continuous Assessment Practices in Enhancing Pupils' Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Kenema City.

Demographic Information of Teachers

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution of Teachers

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	25	62.5
Female	15	37.5
Total	40	100

The data from Table 4.1 show that 25 teachers (62.5%) are male, while 15 teachers (37.5%) are female. This indicates that male teachers form the majority in the selected secondary schools. In relation to continuous assessment practices, gender distribution may influence instructional style, classroom management, and approaches to assessment. However, effectiveness in implementing continuous assessment depends more on professional competence and training than gender alone. The presence of both male and female teachers ensures diversity in teaching and assessment strategies. A balanced gender

Table 4.2: Age Distribution of Teachers

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20–29	6	15
30–39	14	35
40–49	12	30
Total	40	100

The age distribution reveals that 6 teachers (15%) fall within 20–29 years, 14 teachers (35%) are between 30–39 years, 12 teachers (30%) are within 40–49 years, and 8 teachers (20%) are 50 years and above. The majority

(65%) are within the 30–49 age range, which represents the most professionally active and experienced stage of teaching careers. Teachers within this age bracket are likely to have developed stable assessment practices and classroom management skills necessary for effective continuous assessment implementation. The 20% aged 50 and above may possess extensive experience, though they may rely more on traditional assessment methods. Meanwhile, younger teachers may be more adaptable to modern assessment strategies. This combination of age groups contributes to a blend of experience and innovation in continuous assessment practices.

Table 4.3: Highest Academic Qualification of Teachers

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Certificate	5	12.5
Diploma	10	25
Bachelor's Degree	20	50
Master's Degree	4	10
Other	1	2.5
Total	40	100

The findings in Table 4.3 indicate that 20 teachers (50%) hold a Bachelor's Degree, 4 teachers (10%) possess a Master's Degree, 10 teachers (25%) have Diplomas, 5 teachers (12.5%) hold Certificates, and 1 teacher (2.5%) has another qualification. This suggests that the majority of teachers possess at least a first degree, which is adequate for professional teaching and assessment responsibilities. Higher academic qualifications often expose teachers to advanced concepts in measurement and evaluation, which are essential for designing reliable and valid continuous assessment tools. However, the 37.5% with qualifications below a bachelor's degree may require further professional development to strengthen assessment competencies. Overall, the qualification profile supports the effective implementation of structured continuous assessment practices.

Table 4.4: Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1–5 years	8	20
6–10 years	12	30
11–15 years	10	25
16 years and above	10	25
Total	40	100

The results above show that 8 teachers (20%) have 1–5 years of experience, 12 teachers (30%) have 6–10 years, 10 teachers (25%) have 11–15 years, and another 10 teachers (25%) have 16 years and above. This indicates that 80% of the respondents have more than five years of teaching experience. Experience plays a critical role in the successful implementation of continuous assessment, as it enhances teachers' ability to design appropriate tests, provide constructive feedback, and maintain accurate records. Teachers with over ten years of experience are likely to have encountered various assessment challenges and developed coping strategies. The relatively smaller proportion of less experienced teachers suggests that most respondents are adequately positioned to provide reliable information on continuous assessment effectiveness.

Table 4.5: School Distribution of Teachers

School	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Government Secondary School Kenema	15	37.5

Methodist Secondary School Kenema	13	32.5
Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema	12	30
Total	40	100

From Table 4.5, the distribution shows that 15 teachers (37.5%) are from Government Secondary School Kenema, 13 teachers (32.5%) from Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and 12 teachers (30%) from Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema. The distribution is relatively balanced across the three institutions, ensuring fair representation of public, mission, and faith-based schools. This balance strengthens the reliability of the findings and allows for broader conclusions regarding continuous assessment practices in Kenema City. Differences in school management structures may influence monitoring systems and resource availability, which in turn affect assessment implementation. However, the proportional representation ensures that no single institution dominates the data.

Demographic Information of Pupils

Table 4.6: Gender Distribution of Pupils

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	34	56.7
Female	26	43.3
Total	40	100

The findings from Table 4.6 reveal that 34 pupils (56.7%) are male, while 26 pupils (43.3%) are female. Although males constitute a slight majority, the representation of female pupils remains substantial. Gender balance among pupils is important when assessing the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices, as it ensures that perspectives reflect experiences across both groups. Continuous assessment is designed to promote equal learning opportunities through regular evaluation and feedback. Therefore, the presence of both male and female respondents allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how assessment practices influence academic achievement across gender lines.

Table 4.7: Class Level of Pupils

Class Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
JSS 1	8	13.3
JSS 2	10	16.7
JSS 3	12	20
SSS 1	10	16.7
SSS 2	10	16.7
SSS 3	10	16.7
Total	60	100

The distribution across class levels is relatively even, with JSS 3 recording the highest proportion at 20%. The remaining classes each contribute between 13.3% and 16.7%. This balanced representation ensures that the study captures experiences from both junior and senior secondary levels. Continuous assessment practices may vary slightly between lower and upper classes due to curriculum demands and examination pressures. By including

pupils from all levels, the study provides a holistic evaluation of assessment implementation and its impact on academic achievement throughout the secondary school cycle.

Table 4.8: School Distribution of Pupils

School	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Government Secondary School Kenema	22	36.7
Methodist Secondary School Kenema	20	33.3
Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema	18	30
Total	60	100

The data from Table 4.8 show that 22 pupils (36.7%) are from Government Secondary School Kenema, 20 pupils (33.3%) from Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and 18 pupils (30%) from Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema.

The distribution is proportionate and ensures institutional balance. Since continuous assessment practices may differ slightly across schools due to administrative structures and resource availability, this representation strengthens the generalizability of findings within Kenema City. The fairly equal contribution from the three schools enhances the credibility of conclusions drawn regarding the effectiveness of continuous assessment in improving pupils' academic achievement.

Types of Continuous Assessment Practices

Table 4.9: Assessment Methods Used by Teachers

Assessment Method	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Class tests	15	37.5
Assignments/Homework	10	25
Quizzes	0	0
Projects	2	5
Practical exercises	1	2.5
Oral presentations	7	17.5
Group work	5	12.5
Classroom participation	0	0
Total	60	100

The findings from Table 4.9 clearly indicate that class tests (37.5%) and assignments (25%) are universally applied forms of continuous assessment. This demonstrates strong compliance with structured testing practices within the schools. However, only 17.5% of teachers use oral presentations and 12.5% apply group work strategies. Since continuous assessment is intended to be comprehensive and inclusive of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, overreliance on written assessments limits its effectiveness.

The relatively lower use of projects (5%) and practical exercises (2.5%) suggests that skills-based and application-oriented evaluation is not fully maximized. In relation to the study topic, while assessment is consistently conducted, its limited diversity may restrict the full enhancement of pupils' academic achievement. Effective continuous assessment requires varied techniques to address different learning styles and competencies.

Frequency of Class Tests

Table 4.10: Frequency of Conducting Class Tests

Class Tests	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Weekly	18	45
Twice a month	12	30
Once a month	7	17.5
Once per term	3	17.5
Total	40	60

The results from Table 4.10 reveal that 75% of teachers administer class tests either weekly or twice a month. This indicates a high level of assessment regularity, which aligns with the principle of continuous monitoring of pupils' progress. Frequent testing allows teachers to identify learning gaps early and implement corrective measures. However, 7.5% conducting tests only once per term reflects minimal engagement with continuous assessment principles. In the context of enhancing academic achievement, frequent assessment encourages consistent study habits and reduces examination anxiety. Nonetheless, excessive testing without meaningful feedback may become mechanical and stressful. Therefore, while the figures show strong commitment to regular assessment, the effectiveness depends on the quality of implementation and timely feedback mechanisms.

Table 4.11: Timing of Feedback

Feedback Timing	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Immediately	10	25
Within one week	18	45
End of term	8	20
Rarely	4	10
Total	40	60

From Table 4.11, feedback plays a central role in continuous assessment effectiveness. The data show that 70% of teachers provide feedback immediately or within one week, which is positive and supports formative learning. Prompt feedback helps pupil's correct mistakes, reinforce strengths, and improve subsequent performance. However, 30% delay feedback until the end of term or rarely provide it. This undermines the formative purpose of continuous assessment, reducing it to mere score recording rather than learning enhancement. In relation to the study topic, while assessment frequency is high, delayed feedback weakens its impact on academic achievement. Therefore, the effectiveness of continuous assessment depends not only on how often pupils are tested but also on how quickly and constructively feedback is delivered.

Perceived Academic Benefits

Table 4.12: Effect of Continuous Assessment on Learning

Statement	Yes	Percentage No	No	Percentage
Helps understand subjects better	52	86.7%	8	13.3%
Helps understand subjects better	54	90%	6	10%

From Table 4.12, the majority of pupils (86.7%) agree that continuous assessment improves their understanding of subjects, while 90% state that it motivates regular study. These figures strongly support the argument that continuous assessment enhances academic achievement. Regular engagement with tests, assignments, and quizzes compels pupils to study consistently rather than relying solely on final examinations. The high percentages indicate that pupils perceive assessment as beneficial rather than punitive. However, the small percentage of negative responses suggests that some pupils may experience assessment overload or insufficient feedback. Overall, the data demonstrate that when properly implemented, continuous assessment contributes positively to learning outcomes and academic performance in secondary schools in Kenema City.

Challenges Experienced by Pupils

Table 4.13: Challenges of Continuous Assessment

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Delay in results	20	33.3
Unclear grading system	10	25
Too many assessments	30	50
Total	60	100

Table 4.13 reveals that half of the pupils (50%) believe there are too many assessments, while 33.3% complain about delayed results. This indicates that although continuous assessment supports learning, its excessive or poorly managed implementation may create pressure and reduce its effectiveness. Furthermore, 25% report unclear grading systems, suggesting a need for transparency in marking criteria. In relation to academic achievement, confusion or overload can reduce motivation and performance. Therefore, while continuous assessment is beneficial, its effectiveness depends on balanced frequency, timely feedback, and clear grading standards.

Overall Interpretation

The analysis confirms that continuous assessment practices are widely implemented in the selected schools. Teachers frequently conduct tests and assignments, and pupils acknowledge academic benefits. However, limited diversity in assessment methods, delayed feedback, and workload challenges reduce full effectiveness.

The findings therefore suggest that continuous assessment positively influences pupils' academic achievement in Kenema City secondary schools, but structural improvements are necessary to maximize its impact.

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of the major findings of the study, the implications of the findings, conclusions drawn from the research, recommendations, contributions to knowledge, and suggestions for future studies. The study examined the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices in enhancing pupils' academic achievement in secondary schools in Kenema City, focusing on Government Secondary School Kenema, Methodist Secondary School Kenema, and Ansarul Islamic Secondary School Kenema.

Data were collected from 100 respondents comprising 40 teachers and 60 pupils using structured questionnaires. The results presented in Chapter Four revealed important insights regarding the types of continuous assessment practices used, the frequency of assessment activities, teachers' competence in implementing assessment practices, the perceived impact on pupils' academic achievement, and the challenges affecting effective implementation. The discussion in this chapter interprets these findings in relation to the research objectives and relevant literature reviewed

Discussion of the Findings

Types of Continuous Assessment Practices Used in the Selected Schools

The findings revealed that class tests and assignments are the most commonly used forms of continuous assessment in the selected secondary schools. Specifically, class tests accounted for the highest proportion of assessment methods used by teachers (37.5%), followed by assignments (25%) and oral presentations (17.5%). However, other forms of continuous assessment such as projects, practical exercises, quizzes, group work, and classroom participation were used less frequently.

This finding suggests that teachers rely heavily on traditional written assessment methods when implementing continuous assessment. Although written tests and assignments are important tools for evaluating cognitive learning outcomes, the limited use of practical and collaborative assessment methods may restrict the full scope of continuous assessment. Continuous assessment is intended to evaluate pupils across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, and therefore requires a wider range of assessment techniques.

The findings support the views of Black and Wiliam (2018) who argue that effective formative assessment involves the use of diverse methods to capture different aspects of learners' knowledge and skills. Similarly, Brown and Knight (2020) emphasize that assessment diversity improves the reliability of academic evaluation and enhances pupils' engagement in the learning process.

In the context of the selected schools in Kenema City, the overreliance on written tests may limit pupils' opportunities to demonstrate creativity, practical competence, and collaborative learning skills. Consequently, while continuous assessment is implemented, its full potential may not be realized due to the limited variety of assessment strategies.

Frequency of Continuous Assessment Activities

The study revealed that the majority of teachers conduct class tests either weekly (45%) or twice a month (30%), indicating a high level of assessment frequency in the selected schools. Frequent testing allows teachers to monitor pupils' progress regularly and identify learning difficulties at an early stage.

This finding aligns with the principles of formative assessment, which emphasize continuous monitoring of learners' progress. Frequent assessments encourage pupils to develop consistent study habits and sustained engagement with learning materials. Yusuf and Afolayan (2021) also reported that regular assessment activities motivate pupils to remain academically active throughout the school term.

However, the findings also revealed that a small proportion of teachers (7.5%) conduct assessments only once per term, which contradicts the principles of continuous assessment. Infrequent assessment may reduce opportunities for monitoring pupils' learning progress and providing timely interventions.

Therefore, although the overall frequency of continuous assessment is relatively high in the selected schools, maintaining balanced assessment schedules is necessary to prevent excessive workload for pupils and teachers.

Teachers' Competence in Implementing Continuous Assessment

The demographic findings indicated that most teachers possess Bachelor's degrees (50%) and several years of teaching experience (80% have more than five years of experience). The majority also fall within the professional age range of 30–49 years (65%), which is generally associated with stable teaching competence and experience in classroom management.

These findings suggest that the selected schools have a relatively qualified teaching workforce capable of implementing continuous assessment practices effectively. Teachers with adequate academic qualifications and experience are more likely to design valid assessment tools, maintain accurate records, and provide constructive feedback to pupils.

However, the presence of teachers with qualifications below a bachelor's degree (37.5%) indicates that professional development opportunities may still be required to strengthen assessment literacy. Adeyemi (2020) emphasizes that teacher training in measurement and evaluation is essential for improving assessment practices and ensuring fairness in grading systems.

Therefore, while the overall competence of teachers appears satisfactory, continuous professional development remains necessary to improve assessment quality and effectiveness.

Effect of Continuous Assessment on Pupils' Academic Achievement

The findings clearly indicate that continuous assessment positively influences pupils' academic achievement. A large majority of pupils reported that continuous assessment helps them understand subjects better (86.7%) and motivates them to study regularly (90%).

This suggests that continuous assessment promotes active learning, consistent study habits, and improved academic engagement. When pupils are assessed regularly through assignments, tests, and classroom activities, they become more aware of their learning progress and are motivated to improve their performance.

These findings support the conclusions of several empirical studies which indicate that continuous assessment enhances pupils' learning outcomes by providing opportunities for practice, feedback, and reflection (OECD, 2021). Black and Wiliam (2018) also found that formative assessment practices significantly improve academic achievement when integrated into classroom instruction.

Therefore, the results of this study confirm that continuous assessment plays a critical role in improving pupils' academic performance in secondary schools in Kenema City.

Challenges Affecting Continuous Assessment Implementation

Despite the benefits of continuous assessment, the study identified several challenges affecting its effectiveness. The most common challenges reported by pupils include too many assessments (50%), delayed feedback (33.3%), and unclear grading systems (25%).

The perception that there are too many assessments suggests that some pupils may experience assessment overload, which can lead to stress and reduced motivation. Additionally, delayed feedback reduces the formative value of assessment because pupils are unable to identify and correct their mistakes in a timely manner.

These challenges are consistent with findings from Andrade and Brookhart (2021), who noted that delayed feedback and poor assessment management reduce the effectiveness of continuous assessment in improving learning outcomes.

Therefore, addressing these challenges is essential for maximizing the benefits of continuous assessment in the selected schools.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have several important implications for education stakeholders in Sierra Leone.

First, the study highlights the need for diversification of assessment methods in secondary schools. Teachers should incorporate practical activities, projects, group work, and classroom participation into continuous assessment to ensure comprehensive evaluation of pupils' learning.

Second, the study underscores the importance of timely and constructive feedback. Schools should encourage teachers to provide prompt feedback to pupils so that assessment results can effectively guide learning improvement.

Third, the findings imply that teacher professional development in measurement and evaluation should be strengthened. Training programs will enable teachers to design better assessment tools and apply fair grading practices.

Finally, the study suggests that school administrators and policy makers should monitor continuous assessment implementation to ensure that it is conducted effectively and consistently across schools.

Conclusion

This study examined the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices in enhancing pupils' academic achievement in selected secondary schools in Kenema City. The findings revealed that continuous assessment is widely practiced in the schools, particularly through class tests and assignments. Teachers conduct assessments regularly, and pupils generally perceive continuous assessment as beneficial for improving their understanding of subjects and motivating regular study habits.

However, the study also identified certain limitations in the implementation of continuous assessment, including limited diversity in assessment methods, delayed feedback, and concerns about excessive assessment workload.

Overall, the study concludes that continuous assessment significantly contributes to improving pupils' academic achievement, but its effectiveness depends largely on proper implementation, timely feedback, and the use of varied assessment strategies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Diversification of Assessment Methods:** Teachers should diversify assessment methods by incorporating projects, practical activities, group work, and presentations in addition to written tests and assignments.
2. **Clear Assessment Guidelines:** Schools should establish clear assessment guidelines to ensure transparency and fairness in grading systems.
3. **Timely Feedback:** Teachers should provide timely feedback on pupils' assignments and tests to support continuous learning improvement.
4. **Professional Development:** Professional training programs should be organized for teachers to strengthen their knowledge and skills in educational measurement and evaluation.
5. **Strengthened Supervision:** School administrators should strengthen supervision and monitoring of continuous assessment practices to ensure proper implementation.
6. **Policy Support:** The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) should provide additional resources and policy support to enhance continuous assessment practices in secondary schools.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of continuous assessment practices in secondary schools in Kenema City. While previous studies have examined continuous assessment in broader national contexts, this study offers localized insights into how assessment practices influence pupils' academic achievement within specific schools.

The study also highlights practical challenges affecting continuous assessment implementation and provides recommendations that can guide improvements in assessment practices within the Sierra Leonean education system.

Suggestions for Future Study

Future researchers may consider the following areas for further investigation:

1. A comparative study of continuous assessment practices in public and private secondary schools in Sierra Leone.

2. An investigation into the relationship between continuous assessment and national examination performance such as BECE and WASSCE.
3. A study examining the impact of teacher training in measurement and evaluation on assessment effectiveness.
4. Research exploring pupils' attitudes toward continuous assessment across different regions of Sierra Leone.

Such studies would expand the understanding of assessment practices and contribute to improving educational quality in the country.

REFERENCES

1. Adeyemi, T. O. (2020). Continuous assessment practices and academic achievement in secondary schools in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Assessment and Evaluation*, 8(2), 45–58.
2. Andrade, H. L., & Brookhart, S. M. (2021). Classroom assessment as the co-regulation of learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 28(4), 389–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2021.1901063>
3. Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2018). Classroom assessment and pedagogy. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 25(6), 551–575. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2018.1441807>
4. Brookhart, S. M. (2017). *How to give effective feedback to your students* (2nd ed.). ASCD.
5. Brown, S., & Knight, P. (2020). *Assessing learners in higher education* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
6. Harlen, W. (2019). *Assessment and learning* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
7. Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112. <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>
8. Komba, S. C., & Mwandanji, M. (2020). Reflections on the implementation of competence-based curriculum in Tanzanian secondary schools. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 9(3), 109–117. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v9n3p109>
9. Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education. (2022). *National curriculum framework for secondary education in Sierra Leone*. Government of Sierra Leone.
10. Nitko, A. J., & Brookhart, S. M. (2018). *Educational assessment of students* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
11. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2021). *Education at a glance 2021: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>
12. Piaget, J. (1972). *The psychology of the child*. Basic Books.
13. Popham, W. J. (2017). *Classroom assessment: What teachers need to know* (8th ed.). Pearson.
14. Stiggins, R. J. (2018). *Revolutionize assessment: Empower students, inspire learning*. Corwin Press.
15. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
16. Yusuf, M. A., & Afolayan, J. A. (2021). Continuous assessment and students' academic performance in secondary schools. *International Journal of Educational Research and Development*, 12(1), 22–34.