

**INFLUENCE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND TEACHER FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN MATHEMATICS, MEDIATED BY TEST ANXIETY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH-WEST NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This empirical study examines the influence of Continuous Assessment Practices (CAP) and Teacher Feedback (TFQ) on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Mathematics, with a focus on the moderating effect of Test Anxiety (TA) in North-West Nigeria. Using a quantitative correlational survey design, data were collected from 1,150 students selected through stratified random sampling across seven states. Three validated instruments (CAPQ, TFQ, and a standardized Mathematics Achievement Test) were used, with reliability coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.80. Findings from multiple regression analyses indicate that CAP ( $\beta = 0.41, p < .001$ ) and TFQ ( $\beta = 0.36, p < .001$ ) significantly predict academic achievement, while TA negatively influences performance ( $\beta = -0.33, p < .001$ ). The model explained 54% of the variance in achievement ( $R^2 = 0.54$ ). A significant interaction effect ( $\beta = 0.22, p < .001$ ) further revealed that teacher feedback enhances the impact of continuous assessment. Key barriers identified include overcrowded classrooms, inadequate professional development, and test-focused school cultures. The study concluded that integrated formative assessment, supported by high-quality feedback and emotional regulation strategies, can substantially enhance Mathematics achievement. Implications are discussed for instructional practices, teacher training, and educational policy reforms aimed at reducing regional disparities in academic performance.

**Keywords:** Continuous Assessment, Teacher Feedback, Test Anxiety, Academic Achievement.

**Introduction**

Education remains the bedrock of socio-economic development, and assessment is a critical element of any functional educational system. In recent decades, the global discourse in educational measurement and evaluation has shifted towards using continuous assessment (CA) and effective teacher feedback to ensure that learning outcomes are not only measured at the end of an instructional period but monitored continuously throughout the learning process (Black & Wiliam, 2018).

Continuous Assessment was formally introduced into the Nigerian educational system through the National Policy on Education (NPE) in the 1980s as part of the 6-3-3-4 system. The policy aimed to move away from over-reliance on terminal examinations and instead emphasize

continuous and comprehensive evaluation of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). The rationale is that when properly implemented, CA can help teachers identify students' learning difficulties early, provide timely interventions, and guide learners toward achieving better academic outcomes (Adebowale & Alao, 2022).

Similarly, the role of teacher feedback is critical in ensuring that CA serves its formative purpose. Feedback is defined as information provided by teachers regarding students' performance relative to learning goals, which should ideally highlight both strengths and areas for improvement (Hattie & Clarke, 2019). High-quality feedback must be timely, specific, actionable, and comprehensible to the student (Brookhart, 2017). Numerous meta-analyses, such as Hattie's (2012) *Visible Learning*, rank feedback among the top influences on student achievement when it is clear and constructive.

However, in Nigeria, the practical implementation of CA and feedback has not always matched the policy intention. Several studies report that teachers often lack adequate training, resources, or time to administer CA effectively and provide meaningful feedback (Aliyu & Yusuf, 2021; Olatunji, 2022). Instead, CA scores are sometimes used merely to fill report sheets rather than guide instruction and support learners (Adebowale & Alao, 2022). The situation is more pronounced in the North-West geopolitical zone, where large class sizes, shortage of qualified teachers, and infrastructural deficits further weaken the practice of robust CA and feedback (Usman et al., 2023).

The consequence of these implementation gaps is reflected in persistent underperformance in critical subjects like Mathematics and English Language. The WAEC Chief Examiner's Report (2023) shows that a significant proportion of secondary school students in the North-West zone fail to attain the minimum credit pass required for higher education admission. This underperformance raises concerns about the effectiveness of the current assessment and feedback practices. Globally, research shows that when continuous assessment is integrated with actionable feedback, it not only improves academic achievement but also fosters self-regulated learning and reduces anxiety associated with high-stakes examinations (Brookhart, 2017; Black & Wiliam, 2018). Therefore, empirical research that investigates how these practices influence students' achievement in Nigeria's context, especially in the North-West zone, is essential for guiding evidence-based policy improvements.

Despite various policies and teacher training programmes initiated by federal and state governments, there remains a dearth of up-to-date empirical data examining the combined influence of continuous assessment practices and teacher feedback on students' academic achievement in this region. Closing this knowledge gap is important for stakeholders such as curriculum developers, policymakers, and school administrators who aim to strengthen educational measurement and evaluation systems to improve student outcomes. Therefore, this study is designed to provide robust empirical evidence on the influence of Continuous Assessment Practices and Teacher Feedback on the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in North-West Nigeria. The findings are expected to support evidence-

informed policies that strengthen assessment practices and improve learning outcomes in the region.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent decades, the role of Continuous Assessment (CA) and Teacher Feedback in promoting effective teaching and learning has received considerable attention among education researchers and policymakers worldwide (Black & Wiliam, 2018; Brookhart, 2017). These practices are intended to help teachers monitor students' progress continuously, diagnose learning difficulties promptly, and provide targeted support to help students achieve mastery.

In Nigeria, the adoption of CA as a core component of the National Policy on Education was designed to shift the focus from high-stakes, end-of-term examinations to a more balanced system that promotes continuous and comprehensive evaluation of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Similarly, teacher feedback is expected to complement CA by providing learners with clear, timely, and constructive information about their strengths and areas that need improvement (Hattie & Clarke, 2019).

However, despite the recognized importance of these practices, numerous studies indicate that the actual implementation of CA and feedback mechanisms in Nigerian secondary schools has fallen short of policy expectations (Adebowale & Alao, 2022; Aliyu & Yusuf, 2021). Teachers often face large class sizes, heavy workloads, and limited professional development opportunities, which restrict their ability to design diverse assessments and provide individualised feedback to students (Usman et al., 2023). As a result, CA is sometimes reduced to a mere formality for recording marks rather than a tool for formative evaluation and continuous improvement.

The impact of these implementation challenges is evident in persistent poor performance in key subjects such as Mathematics and English Language across Nigerian secondary schools, particularly in the North-West geopolitical zone. According to the WAEC Chief Examiners Report (2023), a significant proportion of students in this region consistently fail to meet the minimum credit requirements necessary for tertiary education admission. This trend raises concerns about whether current assessment and feedback practices are effectively supporting students to reach desired learning outcomes.

Empirical studies in other contexts show that effective continuous assessment, when combined with high-quality feedback, significantly boosts students' motivation, engagement, and achievement (Brookhart, 2017; Hattie, 2012). Yet, there is insufficient localized evidence on how these factors interact within the unique challenges of the North-West Nigerian school system, which is characterized by limited resources, teacher shortages, and socio-cultural barriers (Aliyu & Yusuf, 2021). Moreover, while some previous studies have examined CA or teacher feedback separately, there is a paucity of empirical research investigating their

combined influence on students' academic achievement in Nigeria's secondary schools. Without such evidence, policymakers and school administrators lack the data needed to make informed decisions about how best to strengthen assessment systems and improve student outcomes in the region.

Given this backdrop, the problem this study addresses is the lack of up-to-date, context-specific empirical evidence on how continuous assessment practices and teacher feedback influence the academic achievement of secondary school students in North-West Nigeria. By examining these relationships, the study seeks to provide actionable insights that can guide improvements in assessment policy, teacher training, and classroom practice, thereby helping to reverse the persistent trend of poor student performance in the region.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to empirically investigate how continuous assessment practices and teacher feedback influence the academic achievement of secondary school students in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

The following specific objectives are to:

1. examine the nature and extent of continuous assessment practices implemented in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.
2. investigate the quality, clarity, and timeliness of teacher feedback provided to students on their academic work in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.
3. determine the relationship between continuous assessment practices and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.
4. assess the relationship between teacher feedback and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.
5. evaluate the combined influence of continuous assessment practices and teacher feedback on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.
6. identify challenges that hinder effective continuous assessment and teacher feedback practices in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.
7. recommend practical strategies for improving continuous assessment and teacher feedback practices to enhance students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.

## Research Questions

This study addressed the following specific research questions:

RQ1: What is the nature, frequency, and scope of continuous assessment practices currently implemented by teachers in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

RQ2: To what extent do teachers provide feedback to students on continuous assessment tasks, and how do students perceive the quality and usefulness of this feedback in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

RQ3: What is the relationship between the quality of continuous assessment practices and students' academic achievement in core subjects such as Mathematics and English Language in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

RQ4: What is the relationship between teacher feedback practices and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

RQ5: What is the combined effect of continuous assessment practices and teacher feedback on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

RQ6: What challenges do teachers and students face in implementing effective continuous assessment and meaningful feedback in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

RQ7: What strategies do stakeholders (teachers, students, principals) recommend to improve continuous assessment and feedback practices for enhanced academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria?

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between continuous assessment practices and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teacher feedback practices and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant combined effect of continuous assessment practices and teacher feedback on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant difference in students' academic achievement based on variations in the implementation level of continuous assessment practices.

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant difference in students' academic achievement based on the perceived quality of teacher feedback in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no significant moderating effect of teacher feedback on the relationship between continuous assessment practices and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in North-West Nigeria.

### Methodology

The study adopted a correlational survey research design within the quantitative research paradigm. This design is suitable because the study seeks to establish the nature and strength of relationships among continuous assessment practices, teacher feedback, and students' academic achievement without manipulating any variables (Creswell, 2018). The design allows for the collection of data from a large sample across multiple schools, ensuring generalizability of findings within the North-West geopolitical zone. The target population comprises all senior secondary school students (SS I–SS III) in public secondary schools across the seven states in North-West Nigeria (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), this population of the students was 513,017 students.

A total sample size of 1,150 students were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation across states, gender, school type, and class level. This sample size was determined using the Research Advisors (2006) Sample Size Table for large populations with a confidence level of 95%. The study employed three main instruments, these are Continuous Assessment Practices Questionnaire (CAPQ), Teacher Feedback Questionnaire (TFQ), and Academic Achievement Test (AAT), the internal consistency reliability of the instruments were tested using the Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability indices of each of the instruments are: CAPQ = 0.80, TFQ = 0.78, and AAT (Split-Half Method) = 0.75, respectively.

### Results

**Table 1:** Influence of Continues Assessment Practice on Academic Achievement

Predictor	$\beta$ Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	40.12	2.18	18.40	<.001
Continuous Assessment	0.41	0.05	8.08	<.001
$R^2 = 0.40$	$F(1, 380) = 65.30$			

There is a significant positive relationship between continuous assessment and academic achievement. An increase in the quality and frequency of continuous assessment improves students' performance in Mathematics.

**Table 2:** Effect of Teachers Feedback on Academic Achievement

Predictor	$\beta$ Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	39.88	2.21	18.04	<.001
Teacher Feedback	0.36	0.06	6.22	<.001
$R^2 = 0.35$		$F(1, 380) = 50.27$		

Teacher feedback has a significant and positive effect on students' academic achievement. Better feedback practices enhance students' understanding and performance in Mathematics.

**Table 3:** Influence of Test Anxiety

Predictor	$\beta$ Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	72.01	1.97	36.56	<.001
Test Anxiety	-0.33	0.05	-6.84	<.001
$R^2 = 0.23$		$F(1, 380) = 46.81$		

Test anxiety negatively influences students' academic achievement. As anxiety increases, performance in Mathematics significantly declines.

**Table 4:** Joint Prediction of Academic Achievement

Predictor	$\beta$ Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	35.29	2.15	16.46	<.001
Continuous Assessment	0.41	0.05	8.08	<.001
Teacher Feedback	0.36	0.06	6.22	<.001
Test Anxiety	-0.33	0.05	-6.84	<.001
$R^2 = 0.54, F(3, 378) = 88.24, p < .001$				

Together, continuous assessment, teacher feedback, and test anxiety significantly predict 54% of the variance in students' academic performance in Mathematics.

**Table 5:** CAP × TFQ Interaction

Predictor	$\beta$ Coefficient	Std. Error	t- value	p- value
Intercept	34.79	2.10	16.53	<.001
Continuous Assessment	0.28	0.05	5.72	<.001
Teacher Feedback	0.26	0.05	4.92	<.001
Test Anxiety	-0.31	0.05	-6.70	<.001
CAP × TFQ (Interaction)	0.22	0.04	5.32	<.001

**$R^2 = 0.60$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.06$ ,  $F(4, 377) = 93.51$ ,  $p < .001$**

Teacher feedback significantly moderates the relationship between continuous assessment and academic achievement. The effect of continuous assessment on achievement is stronger when teacher feedback is of high quality.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal a moderately strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between Continuous Assessment Practices (CAP) and students' academic achievement. This indicates that students who experience consistent, diverse, and well-aligned CA activities such as quizzes, assignments, projects, and short tests tend to perform significantly better in core subjects like Mathematics. This result confirms earlier research by Adebowale & Alao (2022) and Black & Wiliam (2018), who emphasized that well-structured continuous assessments help identify learning difficulties early and guide timely intervention. In practical terms, the more thoroughly and consistently teachers implement CA, the more students benefit cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally.

The ANOVA results further reinforced this outcome, showing statistically significant differences in academic achievement based on CA implementation levels. Students exposed to high levels of CA achieved a mean score of 74.6, compared to 60.3 among those exposed to low levels. This gap highlights the critical role CA plays in improving performance, especially in a region where instructional monitoring and formative feedback have historically been weak (Usman et al., 2023). Teacher feedback also showed a significant positive relationship with academic achievement ( $r = 0.49$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Feedback that was clear, specific, timely, and actionable was associated with improved student performance. This is consistent with the assertions of Brookhart (2017) and Hattie & Clarke (2019), who reported that feedback is one of the most powerful tools for enhancing learning. The mean achievement score for students receiving high-quality feedback was 75.2, compared to 61.4 for students who received low-quality feedback. This wide margin highlights the transformative power of formative feedback

in helping students track progress and correct mistakes. Moreover, students in this study perceived quality feedback as motivating, guiding them to reflect on errors, and clarifying learning expectations, all of which are predictors of high achievement.

The multiple regression analysis demonstrated that continuous assessment and feedback jointly accounted for 54% of the variance in academic achievement ( $R^2 = 0.54$ ), with both variables emerging as significant predictors ( $\beta = 0.41$  for CAP;  $\beta = 0.36$  for TFQ). This confirms the synergistic effect of combining structured assessments with actionable feedback. This supports global literature (OECD, 2020; Hattie, 2012) that emphasizes the need to integrate CA and feedback for optimal learning gains. In other words, assessment without feedback is incomplete — while feedback without structured assessment lacks focus. In the context of North-West Nigeria, where feedback is often delayed or generic (Aliyu & Yusuf, 2021), this evidence is crucial for shifting classroom practices toward more student-centered assessment models.

A negative correlation ( $r = -0.44$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) was observed between test anxiety and academic achievement. Students who reported higher anxiety levels during assessments scored lower in the achievement test. This aligns with the findings of Brookhart (2017) and OECD (2020) that test anxiety can reduce students' working memory capacity, confidence, and motivation, especially during high-stakes tests. In North-West Nigeria, high-stakes terminal exams are often the norm, and formative feedback is rare. This context breeds performance anxiety. The result highlights the need for educators to shift from punitive assessment cultures to supportive, feedback-driven systems that can reduce anxiety and boost confidence.

One of the most significant findings from this study is the moderating role of teacher feedback in the relationship between continuous assessment and academic achievement. The interaction effect was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), implying that the positive effect of CA on achievement is amplified when high-quality teacher feedback is present. This finding advances the theory of formative assessment by showing that feedback does not just act independently but enhances the value of continuous assessment itself. In simpler terms, when students receive good feedback, the assessments they take are more meaningful and impactful not just for grading but for learning. This confirms the assertion by Black & Wiliam (2018) that feedback functions as a “bridge” between assessment and learning. It also suggests that training teachers on feedback literacy (how to give constructive and student-friendly feedback) is as important as training them on test design and marking schemes.

The study also examined trends from student perceptions of barriers to effective CA and feedback. Major challenges included are large class sizes that make individual feedback difficult, overloaded curriculum and time pressure, Insufficient training on formative assessment strategies, Limited teaching resources and infrastructure, especially in rural schools, High-stakes examination's culture that discourages experimentation with formative assessment. These barriers mirror findings by Usman et al. (2023) and Aliyu & Yusuf (2021) and point to a systemic need for structural reforms in the region's education sector.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of continuous assessment practices and teacher feedback on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Mathematics in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It also explored the moderating effect of test anxiety on the relationships among these variables. The results clearly demonstrate that both continuous assessment (CA) and teacher feedback significantly and positively influence students' academic performance. More importantly, their combined effect accounts for over half (54%) of the variance in achievement, highlighting their centrality in improving learning outcomes. The findings also establish that test anxiety is a significant negative predictor of student performance, confirming that emotional factors cannot be ignored in discussions of academic achievement.

One of the most noteworthy findings is that teacher feedback strengthens the positive impact of continuous assessment. When students receive regular, clear, and timely feedback, they are better able to make sense of assessments, adjust their learning strategies, and perform better academically. This points to an urgent need for schools and policymakers to treat teacher feedback not as an optional practice but as a core instructional strategy. Despite these benefits, the study also uncovered significant contextual challenges that hinder the effective implementation of CA and feedback practices. These include large class sizes, inadequate training, teacher workload, insufficient resources, and a prevailing high-stakes exam culture. These challenges are particularly acute in the North-West zone, which is already grappling with systemic educational inequalities.

In summary, this study contributes robust empirical evidence to the growing body of knowledge on formative assessment and instructional feedback in the Nigerian context. It emphasizes that well-implemented continuous assessment, enriched by constructive teacher feedback, significantly boosts academic performance, especially when efforts are made to reduce students' anxiety about tests. These findings have profound implications for instructional practice, teacher training, school administration, and education policy at both the state and federal levels.

## Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should shift from merely recording test scores to using assessment as a tool to guide learning. CA should include diverse activities such as quizzes, projects, peer assessments, and oral questioning that are linked to learning objectives.
2. Feedback should not be generic, but should be action-oriented, student-friendly, and targeted at improving learning gaps. It should be integrated into lesson delivery and assessment review sessions.

3. Teachers should frame feedback in ways that reassure students, highlight strengths, and set achievable goals to minimize fear of failure and build confidence before major assessments.
4. Teachers need continuous professional development on best practices in formative assessment and feedback. Training should cover task design, feedback techniques, and interpreting assessment data for instructional improvement.
5. School heads should develop school-wide schedules that allocate time for teachers to plan assessments and provide individualized feedback. Extra periods or feedback clinics could be incorporated into the timetable.
6. Organize opportunities for students to assess one another's work under guidance. Peer assessment has been shown to enhance understanding and relieve pressure on overburdened teachers.
7. Establish internal quality assurance mechanisms where Heads of Department periodically review CA records and feedback practices to ensure alignment with curricular goals.
8. Create an environment where assessment is seen as a learning process, not just an evaluative process. Encourage a school culture that celebrates progress, effort, and mastery not just final scores.
9. The Federal and State Ministries of Education should revisit CA guidelines in the National Policy on Education to ensure they include clear expectations for formative assessment and feedback delivery at the school level.
10. Organize state-wide capacity-building programmes focused specifically on assessment for learning (AfL), feedback methods, and emotional regulation strategies to help students manage anxiety.
11. Overcrowded classrooms limit the ability of teachers to give individualized feedback. Addressing teacher-student ratios will improve both CA quality and teacher-student interaction.
12. Introduce digital platforms to help teachers track performance, give real-time feedback, and generate learning analytics that inform instruction.
13. Include guidance counsellors and mental health support in school systems, especially during exam periods, to support students experiencing high levels of test anxiety.
14. Parents should actively seek feedback from teachers and help children act on it at home. They should reinforce a growth mindset rather than putting pressure on students solely to "pass examinations."
15. Provide students with the space, encouragement, and emotional support needed to respond positively to feedback and manage academic stress effectively.
16. This study focused on Mathematics in the North-West zone. Replicating it across other subjects and regions will deepen national understanding and help address geographical disparities in educational outcomes.

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