

How Assessment Influences Pupils' Academic Performance in Government Aided Primary Schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District, Uganda

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Abstract

This article reports how Assessment Influences Pupils' Academic Performance in Government Aided Primary Schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District in Uganda. This study also investigated the relationship between formative assessment and pupils' academic performance, the relationship between summative assessment and pupils' academic performance, and the relationship between academic staff motivation and pupils' academic performance. The study reviewed related literature by other scholars in assessment and pupils' academic performance in order to have deep understanding of the assessment and student pupils' performance in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District in Uganda through the continuous assessment grading system which requires the assessment of the change in behaviors, in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The pupils are evaluated from one stage to the other through tests, assignments, projects and other school activities. At the end of the term, the tests are used for determining the performance of the pupils in a particular subject visa vis academic staff motivation.

Keywords: Assessment; academic staff motivation; Academic performance; government aided primary schools.

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1. Introduction

The study established that learners' assessment on pupils' academic performance is unsatisfactory. In particular, the study established that besides learners' assessment on pupils' academic performance, many of the teachers did not even meet their pupils' academic performance.

Specifically, the study indicated that, in Government aided primary schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District, not much learners' assessment had been done. This has had consequences on the academic performance of the pupils, which is in concurrence with Ssonko (2001), who notes that even if the teachers and pupils are very good, the absence of learners' assessment in changing behaviors, in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, the pupils were evaluated from one stage to the other through tests, assignments, projects and other school activities. At the end of the term, the tests were used for determining the performance of the pupils in a particular subject and this could impinge on academic performance. When interpreted broadly, in the context of the socioeconomic characteristics of Namutumba district, and upon thoughtful consideration of all the findings of the study, however, the study leads to conclusions that have implications for the learners' assessment on pupils' academic performance in Government aided primary schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District.

Findings exhibited that the assessment done in government aided primary schools in Namutumba Town Council is not so effective. This leads to insignificance point of view towards good performance. Thus, there is a need to select better tools of assessment in assessing pupils' performance. Therefore, teachers must focus on the best tools of assessment in order to motivate learners towards good performance.

1.1 Review Of Related Studies

Assessment of pupils' level of academic performance is vital to the teaching and learning process as it provides the necessary feedback about the outcome of educational goals and objectives. The assessment of learning outcomes provides objective evidences necessary in the decision-making process in education [1]. The author stated that as pointed out, good measurement resulting in accurate data is the foundation of sound decision making about educational endeavor [2]. The author stated that in education, assessment aims at determining the level of pupils' mastery of a body of knowledge and skills in a subject [3]. The authors stated that Continuous assessment is a classroom strategy implemented by teachers to ascertain the knowledge, skills and understanding attained by pupils at a particular point in time. Teachers administer assessments in a variety of ways in order to observe multiple tasks and information about what pupils know, understand and can do [14]. The authors stated that the assessments are curriculum-based tasks previously taught in classroom. Continuous assessment is a method of evaluation carried out periodically or at a predetermined interval of the school year. It is aimed at finding out how much pupils have acquired in a subject matter. It is a consistence monitoring of pupils' progress in school. It involves collecting data with a view to making valid judgement about the quality of a person, object, group or event. The continuous assessment grading system requires the assessment of the change in behaviors, in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The pupils are evaluated from one stage to the other through tests, assignments, projects and other school activities. At the end of the term, the

tests are used for determining the performance of the pupils in a particular subject [9]. The author stated that continuous assessment is more useful to the pupils, as it provides them with on-going feedback on their performance, helps them to become more self-critical, and encourages them to attempt mastering material as they actually work through a course, thus, achieving success in their academic goals [6]. The authors stated that continuous assessment is more relevant as it allows pupils to demonstrate their ability and development on a periodical basis, so that pupils who have studied hard but are not very good at sitting for examinations are not placed at a disadvantage compared with lazy pupils who engage in minimum amount of work needed to pass such examinations. In the past, the educational systems of many African nations were dominated by the one-short summative type of assessment [12]. The author stated that Pupils were trained to pass examinations so as to move up the education ladder; in order to stop this, suggestions for a broader approach to assessment, which would be flexible and also provide valid and reliable results were made. In the light of this, continuous assessment was introduced to find ways in which academic evaluation impacts on the way teaching occurred and learners learnt; hence, the significance of teachers' understanding of relevance of continuous assessment to pupils' academic success. It is when people know about innovation, they are to adopt that they are motivated to embrace its practices. Through the National Policy on Education (NPE), the Government of Uganda stated that educational assessment at all levels of education would be liberalized by basing them in whole or part on continuous assessment. This recommendation was based on some deficiencies identified in the nation's way of assessing pupils [8]. The author stated that traditional system of assessment concentrated only on the cognitive domain, with little or no attempt made to assess the affective and psychomotor domains. This system encourages pupils to study only during the period of examination. This is done by the memorization of facts, which are forgotten after the examination. It was based on these reasons and more that the committee set for National Policy on Education in 1971, recommended the use of continuous assessment in Nigeria Educational System. In pursuance of this policy statement, National University Commission (NUC) allotted 30% and 70% of the total score of the university students to continuous assessment and end of semester examination respectively. Towards this end, this study investigated teachers' perception of continuous assessment relevance to pupils' academic performance in Ilorin metropolis and its implications for counseling in twenty-first century [15]. The author stated that in conclusion, assessment should cater for the three domains that is to say cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains [32]. The authors stated that firm evidence showed that formative assessment is an essential ingredient of classroom work and that its development raised achievement standards. Achieving this goal demanded a four-point scheme for teacher development: learning from development, a slow, yet steady dissemination process, reduction of obstacles, and substantive research efforts [11]. The author stated that assessment practices, such as grades, tests, and feedback, influenced pupils' motivation and learning. It found that certain assessment practices, such as providing informative feedback and involving pupils in the assessment process, positively impacted pupil achievement and motivation [19]. The author concluded that high-stakes testing could have both positive and negative effects on pupil motivation, depending on various factors such as the nature of the assessment, feedback provided, and pupils' individual characteristics [20]. The author emphasized the importance of aligning assessment practices with learning goals, providing constructive feedback, and involving pupils in the assessment process. He also highlighted the potential negative impact of high-stakes testing on pupils' learning and motivation [17]. The author highlighted the importance of timely, specific, and actionable feedback in improving academic performance.

2. Methodology

The study adopted a cross sectional survey research design because the researcher intended to study a specific subset of the study population, collect and analyze data on involvement of teachers in the academic performance of pupils in government aided primary schools. This design was appropriate because it involved collecting data from a relatively large number of respondents in its natural setting (government aided primary schools), cheaply and in a short time (Creswell, 2003).

This survey design was chosen because of its flexibility in data collection as it allowed collection of both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time (Ahuja,2005). Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted as a means of triangulation with the intention of getting quality and un-biased findings. According to Barifaijo, Basheka & Oonyon (2010), triangulation is the process of mixing up methodologies to exploit the synergies offered by the different methodologies. Being academic research therefore, it was suitable to apply the mixed methods approach because it minimizes on the inadequacies of single methods in as the two methods complement and verify each other thus reducing biasness and provide more comprehensive information. The quantitative approach however took center stage in the study.

The target population for the area of study was attained from the government aided primary schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District. This is because they were the only government aided primary schools in the area of study which were viable for data collection.

The target population consisted of 8073 respondents among which were; head teachers, deputies, inspector of schools, heads of departments, parents and pupils. Head teachers were the overall managers of school affairs, deputies play supervisory role, Inspectors of schools had information regarding teachers and schools, heads of departments conduct direct interaction with teachers, and parents provided scholastic materials for their children while pupils were the beneficiaries.

The sample size constituted 367 respondents and it was determined using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table and it included employees in the categories of, 6 Head teachers, 6 Deputies, 1 inspector of schools, 24 Heads of departments, 165 parents and 165 Pupils.

The samples were selected via the following sampling techniques: Census Inquiry and Purposive Sampling

There were different methods used for data collection which were; survey, interview, publications etc. The studies made use of secondary data in collecting the required data from the sources. Secondary data was achieved through the use of structured survey questionnaires.

Therefore, the survey questionnaires were given to respondents from the government aided primary schools and later were picked up by the researcher. Furthermore, Quantitative research procedure was used for the completion of this study in order to provide in-depth data analysis of the research problem from various sources.

Interview guides and questionnaires were the instruments used to collect and gather data.

3. Results

The study focused on the relevant background information about the respondents that participated in the study, related to their gender; jurisdiction; level of educational attainment; and duration of teaching service experience, since they could influence the extent to which the respondents were knowledgeable about the variables that were involved in the study and the extent to which the data that they provided could be generalized to the population. Subsequently, information pertaining to these variables was elicited and the findings are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents that participated in the study by Gender and Position.

Variable	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	141	41.22%
	Female	201	58.78%
	Total	342	100%
Position	Head teachers	06	1.75%
	Deputies	06	1.75%
	Heads of Departments	24	7.02%
	Inspector of schools	01	0.3%
	Parents	140	40.94%
	Pupils	165	48.24%
	Total	342	100%

Source: Primary data (2023)

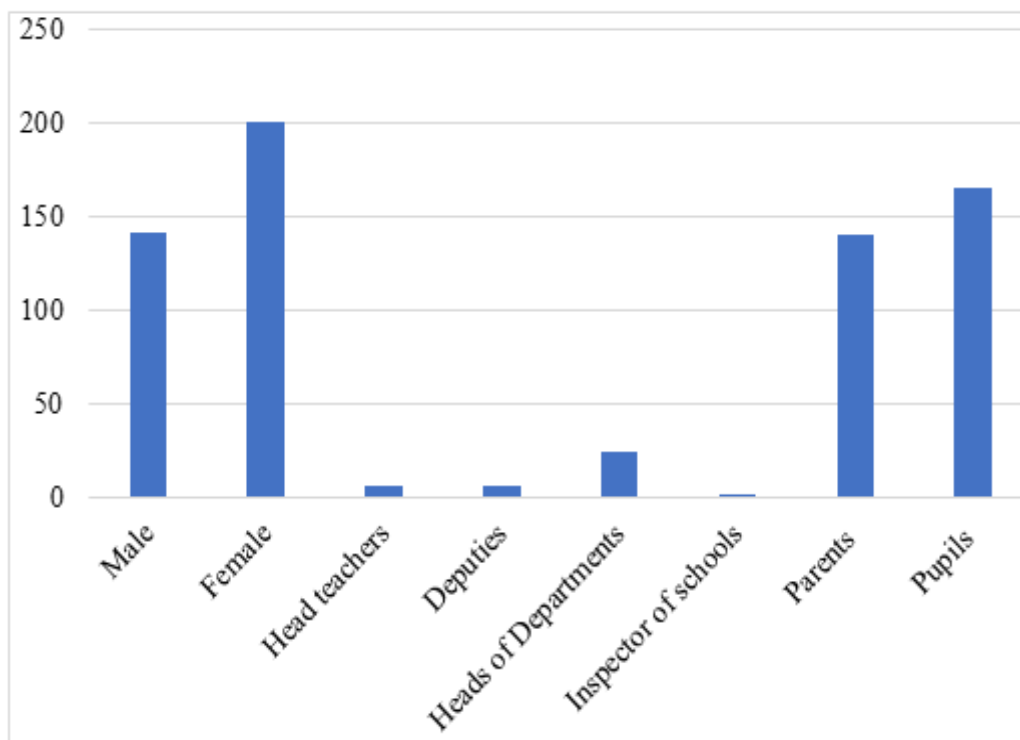


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by gender and position.

Table 2: Distribution of Teachers by Level of Education and Duration of Teaching Experience.

Variable	Categories	Frequency	%
Level of educational attainment	Diploma/certificate	25	67.56%
	Degree	10	27.02%
	Masters/postgraduate	02	5.42%
	Total	37	100%
Duration of education service experience	One to two years	00	00
	Two to three years	00	00
	Over three years	37	100%
	Total	37	100%

Source: Primary Data (2023)

The pupils' interview guide also elicited information on their class and age groups because these variables could influence the pupils' ability to supply credible information about the variables that were involved in the study.

In regards to the gender of respondents, 141 (41.22%) were male while 201 (58.78%) were female. This indicates that males were less in number than females. Results from studies show that females avail time for research as compared to males over untold factors.

In regards to the position of respondents that participated in the study indicate that 06 (1.75%) are head teachers, 06 (1.75%) are deputy head teachers, 24 (7.02%) are heads of department, 01 (0.3%) inspector of schools, 140 (40.94%) are parents, and 165 (48.24%) are pupils. Findings show that most respondents that participated to ascertain the results are pupils who had a large percentage as compared to that of the parents, heads of department, head teachers, deputies and inspector of schools respectively.

In regard to the level of education attained, 25 respondents which is 67.56% have diplomas and certificates, 10 respondents which is 27.02% have degrees, 02 respondents which is 5.42% have masters/postgraduate. This totals to 37 respondents making 100% of education attainment. Findings also show that number of diploma/certificate holders is much bigger as compared to that of degree and masters/postgraduate respectively. This implies that the level of most respondents is still minimal as per the government policy of having all teaching staff have degrees. However, statistics indicate that respondents have greatly and positively impacted the academic performance of the pupils despite their level of education.

About the duration of education service experience, all respondents (37) (100%) have more than three years in the education service. This implies that their experience in education service was binding to give us a conclusive research results more especially on involvement of teachers and their influence on the academic performance of pupils.

Questionnaires were distributed to heads of departments while interviews were conducted with the Head teachers, Deputies, Inspector of schools, Parents and Pupils. From the sample size of 367 there was a response of 100% and a non-response of 00% thus giving a response rate of 100% and a non-response rate of 15.15%

Table 3: Response rate for Respondents.

Category	Sample size	Tool used	Responses	%
Head teachers	06	Interview guide	06	100%
Deputies	06	Interview guide	06	100%
Heads of Departments	24	Questionnaire guide	24	100%
Inspector of schools	01	Interview guide	01	100%
Parents	165	Interview guide	140	84.85%
Pupils	165	Interview guide	165	100%

Source: Primary Data (2023)

This research delved into the effect of learners’ assessment on pupils’ academic performance in Government aided primary schools. To investigate this effect, data was collected using the continuous assessment tool as a classroom strategy implemented by teachers to ascertain the knowledge, skills and understanding attained by pupils at a particular point in time, with the view to observe multiple tasks and information about what pupils knew, understood and could do. The findings on the effect of learners’ assessment on pupils’ academic performance.

To gain insight into how learners’ assessment influenced pupils’ academic performance, questions were raised about consistence in monitoring of pupils’ progress in school. Basing on the findings, the responses were assigned scores. This resulted into an index on learners’ assessment, which was recorded into four categories namely, Teachers administered assessments; mastery of a body of knowledge in a subject, Skills in other activities and tests used for determining the performance of the pupils in a particular subject and how it influenced their academic performance. In table 4., Heads of Departments’ responses are presented.

Table 4: Heads of Departments Response on Learners’ Assessment and Pupils’ Academic Performance.

Responses	Ratings									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
I always give an activity at the end of every teaching/learning process	19	79.17	05	20.83	00	00	00	00	00	00
I always give pupils home work at the end of every learning day	06	25	13	54.16	03	12.5	01	4.17	01	4.17
I always mark pupils work and give corrective feedback	18	75	06	25	00	00	00	00	00	00
I always give end of topic assessment to the learners	07	29.17	12	50	05	20.83	00	00	00	00
I analyze assessment results of my learners	03	12.5	14	58.33	07	29.17	00	00	00	00

Source: Primary Data (2023)

In Table 4, 100% of the heads of department indicated that participation of the teachers of the pupils in Namutumba Town Council in learners’ assessment is at a high level. However, 79.17% and 20.83% of the heads of department respectively strongly agreed and agreed that the teachers always gave an activity at the end of

every teaching learning process.

The heads of department asked affirmed that, despite the fact that the many of the teachers were uninvolved in the learners' assessment but always gave pupils home work at the end of every learning day; majority of the teachers endeavored to always mark pupils work and give corrective feedback. In particular, a dominant view was that teachers always gave end of topic assessment to the learners as said by one of the heads of department.

“It is a normal practice for teachers to assess pupils' progress and performance on continuous bases. It is expected that every teacher will periodically assess his or her pupils in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses and so help the weak and encourage the good ones as appropriate. Assessment of pupil progress and achievement does not only measure pupil progress but also the effectiveness of the course, the lesson, the teacher's methods and teaching styles. Evaluation of pupil progress also enables the teacher to suggest and recommend improvements in the design of the course, the materials and teaching strategies.”

The heads of department were also asked to explain how they analyzed assessment results of learners. They were to respond to questions about the strategy implemented by teachers to ascertain the knowledge, skills and understanding attained by pupils at a particular point in time. Teachers were also to show whether continuous assessment is more useful to the pupils, as it provides them with on-going feedback on their performance and their general academic performance.

The area inspector of schools on how often teachers assessed learners' academic performance and how assessment improved learners' academic performance in the school indicated that most of the teachers in government aided primary schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District did assessments of their learners so as to ascertain their academic performance. Most teachers according to the area inspector of schools gave daily activities, homework, end of topic tests, and exams after which they marked, analysed, made corrections and conducted remedial lessons and gave feedback to the pupils as a way of assessing their performance. Finally, he also affirmed to the researcher that teachers also offered pupils with holiday packages to keep them active during the holidays while at home. This was done to keep the brains of pupils active and when they resumed school, they were subjected to assessment to check if they still remembered the content that was taught to them. This greatly helped teachers positively in improving the general academic performance. However, the area inspector of schools also noted that although most teachers played a vital role in the assessment of learners in schools, some teachers were reluctant to do their part as obligated hence revamping the poor academic performance of these pupils in some schools.

During the interview with the inspector of schools in these government aided primary schools in Namutumba Town council in response to whether teachers assessed learners' academic performance; In his response he said;

“Yes, teachers assess learners' academic performance. Teachers give daily activities, homework, end of topic tests and exams. They also mark, analyze, make corrections, conduct remedial lessons and give feedback to pupils”

In the interview, when asked whether assessment improved learners' academic performance in the school;

He replied, "Definitely, because it is witnessed by the daily activities, homework, end of topic assessments, corrections they make, remedial lessons and feedback which also affirms that there is improvement of pupils' academic performance. However, some teachers do not have time to analyze the results after marking to make corrections and after to conduct remedial lessons".

Findings from head teachers of the government aided primary schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba district affirmed that teachers always gave daily activities, home works, end of topic/unit tests and exams. These gave continuity in the assessment of the academic performance of pupils. These assessments also helped teachers to identify pupils' areas of improvement, pupils' weaknesses and see how they could adjust towards improving the performance of pupils. However, head teachers also affirmed that a few teachers still had a vice of not giving pupils end of topic/unit tests but rather gave end of term exams. This gave no room for pupils' improvement; pupils weaknesses were also not catered for and also remedials and corrections were not done. This negatively impacted the general academic performance of the pupils in these schools leading to poor performance among the schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District.

In the interview, the researcher did ask whether teachers assessed learners' academic performance;

One of the head teachers said;

"Teachers do assess learners. They give them daily activities, homework, end of topic/unit tests and exams."

When asked whether assessment improved learners' academic performance in the school; One of the head teachers also said;

"Assessments improved academic performance because learners' weaknesses are identified and strategies are laid to see how they are improved towards the pupils' academic performance.

However, he also said;

"For teachers who do not carry out assessments, their pupils tend to be dull because their weaknesses are not identified for improvement and these always have poor academic performance".

Research findings from the deputy head teachers of the government aided primary schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba district also affirmed that teachers in these schools always gave daily activities, home works, end of topic/unit tests and exams. The purpose of these assessments was to improve the academic performance of pupils. Pupils through daily activities, home works, end of topic/unit tests and exams found it pleasing as it also helped them adjust to improving their class room performance and their general academic performance.

During the interview with the researcher, deputy head teachers were asked whether teachers assessed learners'

academic performance; One of the deputy head teachers in his response said;

“They do it regularly as far as normal lessons are concerned and these are concurrent and also carried out monthly and termly.

And when asked whether assessment improved learners’ academic performance in the school; One of the deputy head teachers also said;

“Definitely”

However, deputy head teachers also affirmed that some teachers failed to avail time for pupils there by limiting learners’ assessment leading to their poor performance. This created a negative impact on the general academic performance of the pupils in the schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District.

According to parents’ responses on how teachers conduct learners’ assessment and how it influences academic performance of pupils; it was established that teachers gave homework to pupils, and marked the work. They also improved reading skills, encouraged pupils not to be absent, referred them to books for further reading, and carried out follow ups of pupils most especially after school and during weekends to ascertain if they were doing continued reading of their books and work given to them. Parents affirmed that these kept learners busy in books and also limited them from spending time idling and engaging in unproductive activities.

In the interview between the researcher and the parents one parent was asked to cite one experience in which the teacher did very well towards the academic performance of her child. She said;

“My daughter can now read and interpret because she does it for me when she is at home and he has helped her to organize her work, read, write and has highly picked interest in mathematics subject.”

Another parent also said that;

“She guides her child every time to read books such that she can perform well most especially in the science subject the teacher teaches.”

When asked how her child performed in this teacher’s subject; One of the parents replied;

“She is improving and the general academic performance has also improved.”

Another parent also said that;

“He is promising according to the results obtained”

However, some parents declined to disclose because their children still had poor results and their general academic performance was still poor.

Parents also affirmed that this positively influenced and improved the academic performance of pupils in schools in Namutumba Town Council, Namutumba District. However, parents also did affirm that there were still some loopholes and challenges that limited the academic performance of pupils and needed immediate response to curb them and among which there was feeding for pupils at school, management of pupils' health problems, character and general behaviour of teachers at schools. Findings according to pupils' response on learners' assessment and how it influenced their academic performance showed that pupils always asked teachers questions especially in the areas they did not understand well to let teachers further explain because this helped them understand. Corrections were made by the teachers to keep the pupils on track.

During the interview, pupils were also asked how they performed in their favourite teacher's subject; They were also asked to cite one experience which that teacher did very well towards their performance; One of the pupils responded that;

“My performance is good because I always score above average in his subject, the teacher always gives me revision questions that keep me doing work every time even when I am at home”.

However, most pupils got shy to answer this question implying that their performance wasn't pleasing at all.” Another pupil said;

“Good, because I always pass the assessments, she gives me. She also encourages us to work hard, advises me to add more effort to obtain better marks. However, she slapped me one time when I was not focusing on the black board”

Teachers also reviewed what they had taught previously and this helped pupils to remember and memorise what they had learnt. Teachers also went ahead to do hands on teaching most especially for topics like germination where demonstration gardens were used to help pupils understand better. Pupils also affirmed that teachers interpreted questions for them, which made it easier for them to understand the content. They also gave feedback on what had been provided to them, translated what they taught in local language, gave more and elaborate examples, and continuously reviewed what they taught for pupils to understand more for challenging subjects like math and sometimes social studies. This greatly improved the academic performance of pupils.

4. Limitations

A major limitation of the current results is that they cannot adequately distinguish between the influence of assessing versus being assessed. Most of the current studies confound giving and receiving assessment in their designs (i.e., the pupils in the assessment both provided assessment and receive it), and therefore, no substantive conclusions were drawn about whether the benefits of assessment extended from giving feedback, receiving feedback, or both. This raised the possibility that the benefit of assessment comes more from assessing, rather than being assessed (Usher 2018). Consistent with this, Lundstrom and Baker (2009) directly compared the influence of giving and receiving assessment on pupils' academic performance and found that assessing was more beneficial than being assessed. Similarly, Graner (1987) found that assessing papers without being assessed was as effective for improving academic performance as assessing papers and receiving feedback.

Furthermore, more true experiments were needed, as there was evidence from these results that they produced more conservative estimates of the influence of assessment. The studies included in this study were not only predominantly randomly allocated at the classroom level (i.e., quasi-experiments), but in all but one case, were not analyzed using appropriate techniques for analyzing clustered data (e.g., multi-level modelling). This was problematic because it made disentangling classroom-level effects (e.g., teacher quality) from the intervention effect difficult, which led to biased statistical inferences (Hox 1998). While experimental designs with individual allocation were often not pragmatic for classroom interventions, online assessment interventions appear to be obvious candidates for increased true experiments.

While the current results provided an overall estimate of the efficacy of assessment in improving academic performance when compared to teacher and no assessment, it should be noted that these effects were averaged across a wide range of outcome measures, including science project grades, writing ratings, and end-of-term exam scores. Aggregating across such disparate outcomes was always problematic in the study and was a particular concern for study in educational research, as some outcome measures were likely to be more sensitive to interventions than others (William, 2010). Finally, the findings of the study were also somewhat limited by the fact that few studies gave a complete profile of the participants and measures used. For example, few studies indicated that ability of reviewer relative to the reviewee and age difference between the peers was not necessarily clear. Furthermore, it was not possible to classify the academic performance measures in the current study further, such as based on novelty, or to code for the quality of the measures, including their reliability and validity, because very few studies provided comprehensive details about the outcome measure(s) they utilized. Moreover, other important variables such as fidelity of treatment were almost never reported in the included manuscripts. Indeed, many of the included variables needed to be coded based on inferences from the included studies' text and were not explicitly stated, even when one would reasonably expect that information to be made clear in a reviewed manuscript. The observed influence sizes reported here should therefore be taken as an indicator of average efficacy based on the extant literature and not an indication of expected effects for specific implementations of assessment.

5. Recommendations

Since the teachers are not in a good position to offer satisfactory assessment to the pupils, the Government of Uganda should increase grants extended to Universal Primary Education schools in order to come up with effective assessment tools which can look at individual aspects of pupils' development i.e., cognitive, psychomotor and effective domains in order to develop a whole person hence good academic performance.

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