

LEARNER ASSESSMENT AND THE QUALITY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION AT ORDINARY LEVEL IN UGANDA, EASTERN REGION

¹Jackson Matsanga

¹Nkumba University, Uganda/ St. Lawrence University, Uganda

Abstract—This study examined the effect of learner assessment on the quality of secondary education at ordinary level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda. The study was guided by the objectives of determining the effect of learner assessment on the quality of secondary education and the relationship between learner assessment and the quality of Secondary Education. Data were collected from teachers, learners, and headteachers using questionnaires, focus group discussions, and interviews. Findings revealed that learner assessment significantly influences the quality of secondary education. Teachers and learners agreed that activities at the end of lessons, monthly tests, weekly tests, termly examinations, annual examinations, oral questioning, rewarding best-performing learners, and learner participation through chalkboard presentations contribute to improved quality education. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between learner assessment and quality of education ($r = 0.855$, $p = 0.025$ for headteachers and $r = 0.75$, $p = 0.038$ for learners), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concludes that regular and well-supervised learner assessment enhances quality secondary education and recommends strengthening formative assessment practices in all secondary schools.

I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Curriculum implementation requires regular monitoring, evaluation and continuous assessment of learners to determine the extent to which educational objectives are achieved. Assessment is an essential component of teaching and learning because it provides feedback to learners and teachers regarding progress, strengths, and weaknesses. In Uganda, learner assessment occurs in both formative and summative forms. Formative assessment includes classroom activities, topic tests, monthly tests, and termly examinations, while summative assessment is conducted through national examinations administered by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) for Primary leaving examinations, Uganda Certificate of Education and Uganda National Certificate of Education.

Assessment is supported by Constructivism Theory, which emphasizes that learners actively construct their own knowledge through participation and engagement. Thorndike's Law of Exercise and Law of Readiness further suggest that repeated practice and preparedness improve learning outcomes. Therefore, regular learner assessment is expected to enhance the quality of secondary education. The Eagle Logic Theory substantiates Thorndike law of readiness by emphasizing that preparedness and readiness interdependently have a strong contribution to the quality of learning than readiness alone. Both theories, however, substantiate the validity of assessment in the process of Curriculum implementation. During the process of this research study, most learners expressed the great need for regular assessment because it helps learners

to prepare themselves for summative assessment which is meant for placement of the successful learners in specific areas of development for future responsibility.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the importance of assessment in the process of curriculum implementation, the quality of secondary education in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda has remained unsatisfactory as reflected in learners' performance. There is therefore poor assessment that has affected the process of curriculum implementation. Evidence drawn from Secondary schools indicates that there are irregular assessment practices within the region which have affected the process of curriculum implementation. Delayed feedback and inadequate supervision during examinations have also affected the process of curriculum implementation and subsequently the quality of education. Limited formative assessment, and automatic promotion in some of the selected Secondary schools are key factors that affect the process of curriculum implementation and eventually compromise the quality of Education. These challenges contribute to poor assessment which negatively affect learners' level of preparedness and readiness, motivation, confidence and academic achievement. It was therefore necessary to investigate the effect of learner assessment on the quality of secondary education at ordinary level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda. This was due to the need to ascertain its level of effect on the quality of Secondary Education and suggest possible measures for mitigation.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1.To examine the relationship between learner assessment and the quality of Secondary Education.
- 2.To examine the effect of learner assessment on the quality of secondary education at ordinary level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What is the relationship between learner assessment and the quality of Secondary Education at ordinary level, Elgon zone, Eastern Uganda.
2. What is the effect of learner assessment on the quality of secondary education at ordinary level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda?

V. HYPOTHESIS

- 1.H0: There is no significant relationship between learner assessment and the quality of secondary education at ordinary level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.
- 2.HO: There is no significant effect of learner assessment on the quality of Secondary Education at ordinary level in Elgon zone, Eastern Uganda.

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature indicates that learner assessment is a critical component of curriculum implementation. According to Asebiomo (2009), curriculum implementation involves classroom activities that include monitoring and assessment of learners' performance. Assessment may be formative or summative. John Dewey (1859-1952) once said, "one might as well say he has sold when no one has bought, as to say he has taught when no one has learned". This implies that there should be assessment to ascertain if one has learned. This is a reason as to why both formative and summative types of assessment are critical in the process of curriculum implementation. J.C Agarwal (2015) quotes Paul Goodman to have said, "a good teacher feels his way, looking for a response". It means that during the process of curriculum implementation there should be self-evaluation by the teacher and it requires him to assess the learner in order to ascertain how much the learner has grasped so that a teacher can know how well or otherwise he has taught. Formative assessment occurs continuously during instruction and includes lesson activities, topic tests, and monthly tests, while summative assessment occurs at the end of a learning programme.

Assessment has a major impact on students' learning." Cilliers et al. (2012)

Whereas this is a good contribution on assessment, the study did not show fully how assessment impacts on the student and this leaves a knowledge gap that was mitigated by this study.

Birenbaum et al. (2015) posits that assessment should support meaningful learning and learner autonomy. This is in close connection to the constructivism theory. Meaningful learning requires that a student constructs his own knowledge for easy understanding and quick remembrance.

Constructivism Theory emphasizes that learners construct knowledge through active participation. Therefore, assessment practices such as oral questioning, classroom presentations, peer assessment, and regular testing facilitate meaningful learning. Thorndike's Law of Exercise also supports frequent assessment because repeated practice strengthens learning and retention.

Assessment assists teachers in identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses and provides a basis for remedial action. It also motivates learners to study regularly, builds confidence, reduces examination fear, and improves academic performance. Studies by Kanya (2020) emphasize that education is a prerequisite for social and economic development and that effective assessment contributes significantly to educational quality.

Earl (2013) posits that assessment as learning emphasizes students' active role in learning and assessment. This statement comprehends other studies in explaining the value of assessment in the process of curriculum implementation.

Despite these benefits, some schools experience challenges such as irregular testing, poor supervision, delayed marking, failure to return scripts, and automatic promotion. Such practices weaken the effectiveness of assessment and negatively affect educational quality.

VII. METHODOLOGY

The study employed cross sectional survey design and was conducted in Elgon zone, Eastern Uganda. This is an area occupying the districts of Bududa, Manafwa, Namisindwa, Mbale, Bulambuli, Sironko, Kween, Bukwo, Kapchorwa and Mbale city. 563 participants were involved in the study as respondents. These participants included the learners, teachers, headteachers, District Education Officers, NCDC officials and UNEB officials. The study employed questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions to collect data from teachers, learners, and headteachers in selected secondary schools in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda. Random sampling, Purposive sampling and cluster sampling techniques were applied in this study. To determine the sample size, the formular was applied. The data was both primary and Secondary

Yamane, Taro (1967:886) formular was used to determine the sample size. formular is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \text{ where } n \text{ is the sample size, } N \text{ is the study}$$

population and there is e the margin of error which is 0.05 of the study conducted at 95% level of significance. Yamane, Taro, (1967:886) formular was applied. It was computed as follows: $N = 4896$, $e = 0.05$ Hence, $n = 4896 / 1 + 4896(0.05)^2 = 369$.

Table 4.1: Sample size, Sampling Techniques and methods for Data Collection

Target population	Size of target population	Sample size	%age	Sampling technique	Method of data collection
Secondary School administrators	114	31	8.5	Purposive	Questionnaires Interview guide
Secondary School Teachers	1710	94	25.5	Purposive	Questionnaires Interview guide
O'Level Learners	2800	223	60.5	Simple random	Questionnaires FGD guide
PTA members	114	5	1.5	Stratified	Interview guide
BOG Members	114	5	1.5	Stratified	Interview guide
NCDC Secretariat	12	2	0.5	Purposive	Interview guide
UNEB Secretariat	12	2	0.5	Purposive	Interview guide Documentary analysis

DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICIALS	20	5	1.5	Purposive	Interview guide
TOTAL	4896	369	100		

Source: Primary data (2023).

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations Inferential statistics were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and regression analysis through SPSS to determine the relationship between learner assessment and quality of secondary education and the effect of Learner assessment on the quality of Secondary Education.

VIII. FINDINGS

Since the study was conducted using mixed methods approach, the researcher catered for quantitative findings and qualitative findings. Quantitative findings were represented in the tables while qualitative findings were expressed qualitatively The findings revealed that teachers generally provide activities of integration (AOI) at the end of lessons, monthly tests are administered in most schools, tests at the end of every topic are commonly conducted, Schools organize termly examinations , Annual examinations are conducted in most schools , Learners are guided against examination malpractice , best-performing learners are rewarded in some schools, teachers regularly use oral questioning during lessons and Learners are allowed to explain concepts using the chalkboard by some teachers in specific areas of study. Formative assessment is mainly focused on learners' improvement and motivation for proper learning other than any other achievement

Table 8.1: Responses by teachers on Learner assessment and the quality of Secondary Education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda

		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STD
1	Teachers give activities to learners at the end of every lesson.	4.4	15.1	4.4	35.8	40.3	3.92	1.204
2	Teachers give monthly tests to learners in every subject.	6.3	18.9	5.0	36.5	33.3	3.72	1.279
3	Teachers give learners tests at the end of every topic in each subject.	5.6	10.7	2.5	38.4	42.8	4.02	1.183
4	The school organizes termly examinations for all learners.	8.8	10.7	3.8	27.7	49.1	3.97	1.326
5	The school organizes end of year examinations for all learners	7.5	6.3	3.8	22.6	59.7	4.21	1.238
6	Learners are strictly guided against malpractice during examinations.	9.4	2.5	3.8	27.7	56.6	4.19	1.235
7	Best performing learners are rewarded termly.	6.3	13.2	5.0	35.2	40.3	3.90	1.244
8	During lessons, teachers pose oral questions and learners respond accordingly.	5.0	5.7	3.1	30.2	56.0	4.26	1.099
9	In some subjects, learners are given chance to explain concepts to the class using the chalkboard.	6.3	7.5	3.8	29.6	52.8	4.15	1.192
	OVERALL MEAN						4.038	

SA= Strongly agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree. STD=Standard deviation.

Source: Primary data (2025)

Legend Table

Mean	Interpretation	Degree of significance
0.00 - 0.99	Strongly disagree	Too low significance
1.00 - 1.99	Disagree	Low significance
2.00 - 2.99	Neutral	Moderate significance
3.00 - 3.99	Agree	High significance
4.00 - 5.00	Strongly agree	Very high significance

Source: primary data 2025

The data in Table 8.1 revealed that 19.5% of the respondent teachers reported that they don't give activities to learners at the end of every lesson. However, 4.4% of them remained neutral while 76.1% of them agreed that they give activities to learners at the end of every lesson. This implies that a high number of teachers give activities to learners at the end of every lesson. Otherwise, there are some teachers who don't give activities to the learners at the end of every lesson and this is one of the reasons as to why the quality of Education in Elgon Zone is not good.

The data in Table 8.1 revealed that 25.2% of the respondent teachers acknowledged that they don't give monthly tests in different subjects. However, 5% of them were undecided of decision while 69.8% of them agreed that they give monthly tests to learners in every subject. This implies that some few teachers don't give monthly tests in the Secondary schools even if most of them give monthly tests to the learners. Failure to give monthly tests reduces the learners practice in question answering. This is in agreement with the law of exercise as put forward by Edward Thorndike which states that any behaviour that is repeated becomes stronger while that behaviour which is not repeated becomes weakened.

The data in Table 8.1, showed that 16.3% of the respondent teachers disagreed that they don't give tests to learners at the end of the topic in every subject. Whereas 2.5% of them were undecided, 81.2% of them agreed that they give learners tests at the end of every topic in each subject. This implies that whereas the majority of teachers at Secondary schools give tests to learners at the end of every topic in each subject, there is a number of them who don't give the learners a test at the end of every topic. This has negative effect on the quality learning because the learners are not regularly assessed and therefore, they relax.

The data in Table 8.1 indicated that 19.5% of the respondent teachers reported that the school doesn't organize termly examinations for all the learners. While 3.8% of them were undecided, 76.8% of them agreed that the school organizes termly examinations for all learners. This implies that most of the Secondary schools organize termly examinations for the learners. However, there are some few schools that

don't have that consideration. Termly examinations help learners to be kept in the mood of examinations and during final assessment, they are not challenged. Still, they are kept alert in the moods of reading and as such they discover more concepts and values for themselves.

The data in Table 8.1 showed that 13.8% of the respondent teachers said that the school doesn't organize end of year examinations for all learners. However, 3.8% of them were undecided while 82.3% of them agreed that the school organizes end of year examinations for all the learners. This implies that whereas end of year examinations are embraced by many Secondary schools, there are some schools that don't have this type of assessment and it is one of the factors the quality of Education has not been good.

The data in Table 8.1 revealed that 11.9% of the respondent teachers disagreed with the researcher's statement that learners are strictly guided against malpractice during examinations. However, 3.8% of them remained with a neutral mind while 84.3% of them agreed that learners are strictly guided against malpractice during examinations. This implies that majority of the learners of the Secondary schools are strictly warned against malpractice. However, there are a few of them who are not warned in some schools and this has a negative effect on the quality of Education. They do not prepare adequately in advance because they expect assistance during examinations and others expect to smuggle some materials in the examination room.

The data revealed that 19.5% of the respondent teachers disagreed with the statement that the best performing learners are rewarded termly. Whereas 5% of them were undecided, 75.5% of them agreed that the best performing learners are rewarded termly. This implies that the majority of the Secondary schools reward the best learners on termly basis which is a good practice for quality Education. However, a number of schools that don't reward the best learners on termly basis is relatively high and it's represented by 24.5%. This affects the motivation of learners and subsequently the quality of Education.

The data in Table 8.1 indicated that 10.7% of the respondent teachers acknowledged that they don't pose oral questions during lessons for the learners to respond. However, 3.1% of them were undecided while 86.2% of them agreed that they pose oral questions during the lessons for the learners to respond. This

implies that many of the Secondary school teachers are interactive with the learners during the lessons. However, there are some of them who don't allow learners the chance of participating in class. This is an effect which is not in support of quality Education especially as far as the new lower Secondary curriculum (NLSC) is concerned.

The data in Table 8.1 showed that 13.8% of the respondent teachers disagreed that in some subjects, the learners are not given a chance to explain a concept to the class using a chalkboard. However, 3.8% of them remained with a neutral mind while 82.4% of them agreed that in some subjects, learners are given chance to explain concepts to the class using chalkboard. This implies that most of the teachers especially in practical subjects give an allowance to the learners to explain some concepts to the class using a chalkboard. However, there are some teachers who don't consider this practice as important. This was supported by the learners during the FGD. They complained that in some areas teachers don't allow them to use the chalkboard even in MTC to explain the concepts to the class.

Table 8.2: Responses by learners on Learner assessment and the quality
of Secondary Education at Ordinary Level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.

		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STD
1	Teachers give activities to learners at the end of every lesson.	6.1	10.4	3.9	30.8	48.8	4.06	1.221
2	Teachers give monthly tests to learners in every subject.	3.3	10.8	2.6	26.2	57.0	4.23	1.128
3	Teachers give learners tests at the end of every topic in each subject.	3.5	8.0	2.2	23.0	63.3	4.35	1.082
4	The school organizes termly examinations for all learners.	2.6	5.0	2.6	18.4	71.4	4.51	0.957
5	The school organizes end of year examinations for all learners	4.3	48	3.0	16.5	71.4	4.46	1.58
6	Learners are strictly guided against malpractice during examinations.	5.9	6.1	3.7	21.0	63.3	4.30	1.163
7	Best performing learners are rewarded termly.	11.1	10.4	3.9	22.6	52.1	3.94	1.405
8	During lessons, teachers pose oral questions and learners respond accordingly.	2.8	5.6	3.9	28.9	58.8	4.35	0.992
9	In some subjects, learners are given chance to explain concepts to the class using the chalkboard.	2.6	4.1	1.7	25.6	65.9	4.48	0.920
	OVERALL MEAN						4.30	

SA= Strongly agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree. STD=Standard deviation.

Source: Primary data (2025)

Legend Table

Mean	Interpretation	Degree of significance
0.00 - 0.99	Strongly disagree	Too low significance
1.00 - 1.99	Disagree	Low significance
2.00 - 2.99	Neutral	Moderate significance
3.00 - 3.99	Agree	High significance

4.00 - 5.00	Strongly agree	Very high significance
-------------	----------------	------------------------

Source: primary data 2025

From Table 8.2, the data indicated that 16.5% of the respondent learners disagreed that the teachers don't give them activities at the end of every lesson. However, 3.9% of them were undecided while 77.6% of them agreed that teachers give them activities at the end of every lesson. This implies that many of the teachers of Secondary schools give activities to the learners at the end of every lesson. However, there are some of the teachers who don't consider this practice of giving activities at the end of the lesson as important and this has a negative effect on the quality of Education.

The data in Table 8.2 revealed that 14.1% of the respondent learners disagreed that the teachers don't give them monthly tests in every subject. However, 2.6% of them were undecided while 83.2% of them agreed that the teachers give monthly tests to them in every subject. This implies that even if many Secondary schools have a practice of giving monthly tests, there are schools that don't have that consideration, hence affecting the level of assessment which subsequently affects the quality of Education.

The data in table 8.2 revealed that 11.5% of the respondent learners disagreed with the statement that the teachers give tests after every topic in each subject. However, 2.2% of them remained neutral while 86.3% of them agreed that the teachers give tests at the end of every topic in each subject. This implies that many of the Secondary schools have made it a common practice to ensure that in each subject, the learners are assessed at the end of every topic. However, there are some teachers who don't have that consideration, yet this is a good practice as far as perfect assessment for quality Education is concerned. This is even a requirement in the NLSC.

The data in Table 8.2% of the respondent learners disagreed that the school doesn't organize termly examinations for them. However, 2.6% of them were undecided while 89.8% of them agreed that the schools organize termly examinations for them. This implies that majority of the Secondary schools have embraced the culture of termly examinations. On the other hand, however, a reasonable number of schools

(10.2%) don't have termly assessment for their learners. This does not allow the learners the chance of practicing in attempting examinations in order to remove the panic and fear as they prepare for summative assessment. Hence, the quality of Education is negatively affected.

The data in Table 8.2 indicated that 81.1% of the respondent learners disagreed with the statement that the school organizes end of year examinations for them. Whereas 3.0% of them remained with a neutral mind, 87.9% of them acknowledged that the school organizes end of year examinations. This implies that whereas most of the Secondary schools have incorporated the idea of annual assessment for the learners as a common practice, there are some of the teachers who don't consider it as an important factor that fosters the quality of Education.

The data revealed that 12% of the respondent learners did not agree with the statement of the researcher that learners are strictly guided against malpractice during examinations. While 3.7% of them remained with a neutral mind, 84.3% of them agreed that they are strictly guided against malpractice during examinations. This implies that majority of the learners of the Secondary schools are strictly guided and cautioned against malpractice during examinations. However, there are some learners that are not well guided and this has an effect on the quality of Education. They do not prepare by reading because they expect the short cut of copying.

The data in Table 8.2 indicated that 21.5% of the respondent learners disagreed with the statement that best performing learners are rewarded termly. However, 3.9% of them were undecided while 74.7% of them acknowledged that the best performing learners were rewarded termly. This implies that even if most of the schools have embraced the practice of rewarding the best learners on termly basis in the Secondary schools, there were other schools that had not considered this practice as of value.

The data in Table 8.2 revealed that 8.4% of the respondent learners disagreed with the statement that during lessons, the teachers pose oral questions for them to answer. Whereas 3.9% were undecided, 37.7% of them agreed that during lessons, teachers pose oral questions to them and they respond accordingly. This implies that many of the Secondary school teachers always make their classes interactive by posing relevant

questions to the learners as they respond. On a small scale, however, some teachers don't interact with the learners in class during the lessons and this does not support high quality of Education.

The data in Table 8.2 revealed that 6.7% of the respondent learners disagreed that they are not given chance to explain concepts in the class using chalkboard. However, 1.7% of them were undecided while 91.5% of them agreed that in some subjects they are given the chance to explain concepts to the class using the chalkboard. This implies that in most of the Secondary schools, the teachers especially of the practical subjects like physics and mathematics give chance to the able learners to explain concepts to the class using a chalkboard. This practice enhances good and quality learning among the learners as they all struggle to appear Infront of the class. This is in agreement with the Constructivism Theory which states that knowledge should not be passively attained but should be constructed by the learners themselves. As a learner demonstrates to the class, others are able to equally construct their own knowledge. Hence an attribute for quality Education.

Hypothesis Testing.

1.H0: There is no significant relationship between learner assessment and the quality of secondary education at ordinary level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda.

2.HO: There is no significant effect of learner assessment on the quality of Secondary Education at ordinary level in Elgon zone, Eastern Uganda.

The table below was used to test both hypotheses because the content is similar.

Table 8.3: Learner Assessment and Quality of Secondary Education Based on the Headteachers' Responses.

		Learner assessment	Quality of education
Learner assessment	Pearson Correlation	1	.855
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.025
	N	31	31
Quality of education	Pearson Correlation	.855	1

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	
	N	31	31

Source: Primary data (2025)

To test the above null hypothesis, data collected using three categorical questionnaires were put under consideration and that was teachers and learners' questionnaires.

The data was then analysed categorically using the Pearson rank correlation coefficient and regression analysis method by the SPSS approach. The analysed report by SPSS approach for each of the two categorical questionnaires is given here below.

The Pearson rank correlation coefficient value $r = 0.855$ in Table 8.4 above implies that there is a statistically high positive correlation between Learner assessment and the quality of education. This means that an improvement in learner characteristics subsequently leads to an improvement in the quality of education. The significance value 0.025 is less than 0.05 implying that there is a statistically high relationship between learner assessment and the quality of education. Hence, the null hypotheses are rejected in each case and it is deduced that there is a significant effect of learner characteristics on the quality of education and a strong relationship between learner assessment and the quality of Secondary Education. This is in accordance with the responses from the selected Secondary School headteachers as per the questionnaires that were administered to them.

From the headteachers' responses, it was revealed that a strong positive relationship exists between learner assessment and the quality of Secondary education ($r = 0.855$, $p = 0.025$). On the same note, it was revealed that there is a significant learner assessment strongly a

Learners' responses also indicated a strong positive relationship between learner assessment and quality of education ($r = 0.75$, $p = 0.038$).

Since the significance values were less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 8.4: Learner Assessment and Quality of Education Based on the Learners' Responses.

		Learner assessment	Quality of education
Learner assessment	Pearson Correlation	1	.75
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.038
	N	461	461
Quality of education	Pearson Correlation	.75	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038	
	N	461	461

Source: Primary data (2025)

The Pearson rank correlation coefficient value $r = 0.75$ in Table 8.4 above implies that there is a statistically high positive correlation between Learner assessment and the quality of education. This means that an improvement in learner characteristics subsequently leads to an improvement in the quality of education. The significance value 0.038 is less than 0.05 implying that there is a statistically high relationship between learner assessment and the quality of education. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is deduced that there is a significant effect of learner characteristics on the quality of education. This is in accordance with the responses from the selected Secondary School headteachers as per the questionnaires that were administered to them. The table above shows that all the selected 159 teachers participated in the study by filling the questionnaires.

According to National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE), Assessment is of two major categories i.e. Formative and Summative.

Formative assessment guides the learning process while summative assessment, evaluates the degree of achievement of a learner after a specific period of time.

In primary schools, in the Ugandan setting, it comes after 7 years and that is termed as Primary Leaving Examinations; at Secondary, it is of two types i.e Ordinary Level after 4 years leading to the award of Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) while for advanced level is for two years. After UCE, a successful learner can opt to join advanced level which takes two years and leads to the award of Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education. At University, assessment is strictly on semester system.

However, studies by Mazano, R.J & Kendall, J.S (2007) in agreement with studies by Stiggins, R.J (2001) disclosed that there are eight forms of assessments and they include, **Summative assessment, Formative assessment, Diagnostic assessment, Criterion referenced assessment, Norm referenced assessment, Authentic assessment, Performance assessment and self-assessment.**

When one participant was asked how learner assessment affect the quality of education, “he said, Assessment is done for many reasons and in the Secondary schools, diagnostic assessment is lacking which has affected the learning system leading to early leavers (school dropouts).” Information revealed from National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) indicated its mandate as, “NCDC is a corporate autonomous body of the ministry of education and sports and it is responsible for the inter-alia development of Curricula and related materials for various levels of education (pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary), organizing capacity building courses for stakeholders on curricula and matters related to curriculum.”

From the reliable sources a participant in this study revealed that, “NCDC plans for assessment through syllabuses. It gives assessment guide to the schools, the ministry of education and sports and to UNEB. Despite the fact that perfect assessment should be holistic by catering for the three domains i.e. Psychomotor, Affective and cognitive, in Uganda, however, assessment is limited to cognitive only due to cost effectiveness and convenience which has resulted into partial assessment”.

Assessment should aid the Learning process and this is done when a teacher conducts a test or an exercise at the end of the topic or Sub topic or lesson in order to ascertain the degree of achievement of the learner. This may not be enough unless a teacher conducts revision of the same assessment with the learners such that each can discover his/her area of weakness in order to improve for better results.

IX. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrated that learner assessment significantly contributes to the quality secondary education at ordinary level in Elgon zone, Eastern Uganda. Regular tests, examinations, classroom activities, oral classroom questioning, and generally learner participation promote continuous learning and improve academic performance in Secondary Schools.

The findings support Constructivism Theory, which advocates for active learner participation in knowledge construction. The findings further support Thorndike's Law of Exercise, which emphasizes repeated practice as a means of strengthening learning. According to Thorndike law of exercise, repeated practices are strengthened while practices that are irregularly repeated are weakened. For this case therefore, regular assessment is recommended for effective learning because it strengthens the level of remembrance which is key for placement and promotional evaluation.

The study further revealed that irregular assessment, delayed feedback, poor supervision, and automatic promotion undermine the quality of Secondary education. Learners emphasized the importance of frequent assessments in promoting revision, confidence, motivation, discipline, and preparedness for examinations.

These findings agree with Asebiomo (2009), Kamya (2020), and other scholars who argue that assessment is central to effective curriculum implementation and influences significantly the quality of Secondary.

Formative assessment is of two categories; oral assessment and written assessment. Further still, this assessment can be done individually or as a group since it is a learning strategy. Assessing a group of learners is termed as peer assessment. Doctor Dylan Williams uses the analogy of a pilot to summarize the importance of assessment for learning. He says that, “pilots plan a course but then take readings as they go. They then change the course as conditions dictate. Assessment for learning helps us to steer our learners back to track with the ultimate goal of helping them to be the best they can be and to achieve the best possible outcomes they can achieve.”

There was a participant who expressed himself as far as assessment is concerned as follows, “I feel that assessment is good and it is imperative as far as quality Education is concerned because when you are tested, you discover your weaknesses and work hard to improve”

The above participant was supported by another one who said,

“Tests are good because they help you to get familiar with examinations, build confidence and read harder.”

The learners discussed in the details the value of assessment during FGDs. They subdivided it into tests and examinations. One other participant said,

“Tests are helpful in enhancing serious revision. The teachers are able to identify weak learners and attend to them accordingly.”

Another participant said, “tests are very good because they lead to the minimization of malpractice in the final examinations and it is more important when we are given these tests regularly.”

The study is underpinned by the Constructivism Theory which states that knowledge should not be passively attained but should be constructed by each respective learner. The practice of having regular tests enable the learner to read hard and discover more in order to construct his or her own knowledge. In accordance to BF Skinner, a re-known American psychologist, he posits that behaviour is shaped by the consequences that are either positive or negative, that’s to say the rewards or punishments. So, when assessment is used to enhance learning the Theory of Skinner holds whereby a teacher should attach rewards to the best performing learners so that they can perform better and the worst performing learners should be given an equivalent punishment to make them wake up to work harder for better results. Quality of Education is mainly judged basing on the performance and therefore any school whose performance is high, is graded as one of the best schools as far as the quality of Education is concerned. The learners should prepare and be ready for a formative type of assessment which eventually should prepare them for summative assessment. In Elgon Zone, eastern Uganda, at Ordinary Level, the summative assessment is organized by UNEB after four years and it caters for the whole country. In a situation, where tests are irregular, the learners are faced with the challenge of getting practice in the preparation for summative assessment (Final Examinations). In a general interaction with the learners of different schools in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda, it was revealed that assessment is very vital and their recommendations were explained as follows;

“We recommend regular assessment which should either be weekly or monthly because of the reasons associated with its benefits. Regular assessment makes you to revise hard, to manage time, avoid absenteeism, avoid dodging lessons; it makes you to work hard; it encourages you to overcome fear; it encourages group work ;it helps you to form group discussions and develop confidence; it makes you read and always be ready for examinations and as such, malpractice is avoided ;it helps you to develop interest in learning especially when you get good marks; always it helps you to develop the spirit of doing research by comparing notes with what is in the textbooks; it makes you to love examinations and eventually love

Education; it makes you to improve on your self-esteem; it enables you to develop self-motivation; it makes you to be focused on innovation and creativity; it improves upon discipline among the learners; it checks on the level of noise making in class and generally regular assessment improves upon the quality of Education.”

The learners were very objective and realistically they gave their views as noted above. They condemned what is happening in some schools and the researcher took note of some of them. They condemned the following areas that have affected their performance in some subjects as far as assessment is concerned. One participant said,

“Some of our teachers give us tests before teaching the topic and this demoralizes us because we have nothing to write and it is as if they want us to guide them on what to teach”

Another participant expressed his views and said,

“We rarely have tests in our school. we only wait for end of year examinations whereby some of our friends end up coping while others dodge these examinations since there is automatic promotion.”

The above was supported by another participant who said,

“We have tests every term but we don't know if these teachers mark or not. we don't have corrections together and we don't receive back our scripts”.

she was supported by another one who echoed that,

“We always have tests every term but nobody supervises and so people are given free marks which don't portray their true image of performance. This has become a common practice but it has no great effect in any way. Those who copy are not identified by teachers and so reading depends on an individual”.

Formative assessment and summative assessment are equally important as far as curriculum implementation for quality Education is concerned. Formative assessment paves way for summative assessment. At Ordinary Level, the learners always wait with eagerness for the summative assessment. However, it is very necessary to adequately prepare for this type of assessment in order to realize high quality Education.

Formative assessment should be organized in accordance to stipulated time frame. In an organized manner, the learners should be alerted of the time this type of assessment is expected to be for proper preparations. The tests can be organized on a weekly basis or monthly basis in order to enable the learners be kept in the moods of examination always. For assessment to be of value, marking should be done timely and the results should be discussed by both the learner and the teacher. A learner should be made aware of his/her areas of weakness and a teacher should assist the learner to perform better. The learner should be encouraged that there is hope always for improvement because this the responsibility of a good curriculum implementer in the Education system if the quality of Education is to be good. The law of readiness as put forward by Edward Thorndike states that behaviour will be performed if an individual or specific learner is ready to perform it. He further said that animals can learn through trial and error. He stated this under the law of animal intelligence. He said that animals can solve a problem through reasoning. This was stated in his book of animal intelligence. Similarly, learners can also learn through trial and error. As they continue to approach different numbers or questions using different technics, until they reach a point and they realize the best way of doing it rightly. So, the law of readiness holds in that case of assessment.

The overall mean for teachers was 4.038, indicating a very high significance of learner assessment in enhancing the quality of Secondary education.

According to the interactions with learners during the focus group discussions, Learners revealed strongly that learner assessment is very important in the process of curriculum implementation because it keeps them alert. This was further evidenced by an overall mean of 4.30 which implies that most learners strongly agreed according to the Likert scale questions.

X. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that learner assessment significantly influences the quality of secondary education at ordinary level in Elgon Zone, Eastern Uganda. The strong positive correlation between learner assessment and quality education demonstrates that regular and effective assessment improves learners' preparedness, motivation, confidence, performance, and overall educational outcomes. Consequently, learner assessment remains an indispensable component of curriculum implementation and quality assurance in secondary education.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Secondary schools should conduct regular formative assessments on a weekly or monthly basis.
2. Teachers should administer topic tests at the end of every topic taught.
3. Marking and return of scripts should be done promptly.
4. Teachers should discuss assessment results with learners to address weaknesses.
5. Schools should strengthen supervision during tests and examinations to reduce malpractice.
6. Best-performing learners should be rewarded regularly to enhance motivation.
7. Learners should be given opportunities to participate actively through oral presentations and chalkboard demonstrations.
8. Schools should minimize automatic promotion and ensure assessment outcomes are meaningfully utilized.
9. Assessment programmes should be incorporated into school timetables and implemented consistently.
10. The Ministry of Education and Sports should strengthen monitoring of assessment practices in secondary schools.

References

- [1] **Asebiomo, A. M.** (2009). *Principles and practice of curriculum implementation*. Lagos: Educational Research Publishers.
- [2] **Kamya, S.** (2020). *Education as a prerequisite for social and economic development*. Kampala: Educational Development Press.
- [3] **Pavlov, I. P.** (1927). *Conditioned reflexes: An investigation of the physiological activity of the cerebral cortex*. Oxford University Press.
- [4] **Skinner, B. F.** (1953). *Science and human behavior*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- [5] **Thorndike, E. L.** (1911). *Animal intelligence: Experimental studies*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- [6] **Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB).** (2024). *UCE examination performance reports*. Kampala, Uganda: UNEB.

- [7] **National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC).** (2024). *Assessment guidelines under the lower secondary curriculum*. Kampala, Uganda: NCDC.
- [8] **Williams, D.** (2011). *Embedded formative assessment*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- [9] **Zuga, K. F.** (1993). *Relating technology education goals to social and economic concerns*. Journal of Technology Education, 4(2), 34–48.