

ISSUES AND SKILLS INTO THE EFFECTIVE USE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT FOR ENHANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOL

Eregie Edo Austin and Ojeikere Reacheal Onto

Abstract

This paper looked into the effective use of continuous assessment as a way of promoting teaching and learning in schools in Nigeria. The federal ministry of education (1980) defined continuous assessment as a mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviours takes account in a systematic way, of all his performances during a given period of schooling. Such an assessment involves the use of a great variety of modes of evaluation for the purpose of guiding and improving the students. This write up is focused on the characteristics of continuous assessment which are systematic, comprehensive, cumulative and guidance oriented and also the advantages of continuous assessment as an integral part of the teaching learning process which the teacher should be involved in the final assessment of the student under him. Finally, necessary conditions for effective implementation of assessment were highlighted for education planners and the teachers to put into consideration.

Introduction

Continuous assessment may be viewed as a method of finding out what the pupils have gained from learning activities in terms of knowledge, thinking and reasoning, character development and industry. Various tools may be used in finding out the outcomes of these learning activities. There include tests, assignments, projects, observations, interviews and questionnaires.

The data obtained on the pupil will then be used to aid his further development. Beside, accurate records of such data are filled for further use and for the purpose of providing information

to parents, guardians and others who can use them for the benefit of the pupils.

Adesina (2000) viewed continuous assessment as a mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in the cognitive, behaviour systematically takes account of all his performances during a given period of schooling. Such an assessment involves the use of a great variety of modes of evaluation for the purpose, of guiding and improving the learning and performance of the student.

Ezewu and Okoye (1981) saw continuous assessment as a systematic and objective process of determining the extent of a student performance in all expected changes' in his behaviour from the day he embarks upon a course of study in a continuous and progressive manner to the end of such a course of study and a judicious accumulation of all pieces of information derived for this purpose. This will go a long way to shape the inherent skills in learning and also provide information towards taking decisions about the child.

Ehiamelahor (1990) indicated that continuous assessment is a mechanism built for progressive evaluation of changes in behaviour of individual students and for determining the student's level of achievement in a designed course of study.

Supporting this view, Uwagie-Ero (1997) asserted that any assessment techniques being applied must be capable of monitoring the testee's know how from a holistic and global perspective. He further stressed that such an assessment programme should be speed out over a considerable span of life of the person being assessed.

Badmus and Omoifo (1998) saw instrument are used in determining the continuous assessment as a method of evaluation performance. As already indicated these include which uses all available techniques to obtain a tests, projects assignment, observing learners grade (at a given time) that questionnaires and interviews. Another aspects systematically take into account all his previous of the comprehensiveness is that the pupils are performance in cognitive, affective, and seen in their totality because decisions are made psyche-motor areas of learning. based on information obtained in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

Purpose of Continuous Assessment

According to Okpala (1993) the purpose of continuous assessment is to assess the totality of the learner in the teaching-learning setting, in order words, continuous assessment focuses on the intellectual, affective and psychomotor behaviour of the student, the inputs like syllabus and school facilities, teaching personal and assistants, the interactions between teachers and students, students and material, students and students. When continuous assessment is implemented from this framework, it ensures a positive change in behaviour, improvement in learning and improvement in the entire school system.

Continuous assessment also refers to a system of assessment, which is carried out at predetermined intervals for the purpose of monitoring and improving the overall performance of students and of the teaching-learning environment (Omangbon, 1993).

Characteristics of Continuous Assessment

The following are the characteristics of continuous assessment.

a. Systematic: Continuous assessment is said to be systematic in the sense that it requires an operational plan, which indicates what measurements are to be made of the pupils performance, at what time interval or times during the school year the measurements are to be made and the results recorded, and the nature of the tools or instruments to be used in the measurement.

b. Comprehensive: Continuous assessment is comprehensive in the sense that many types of

c. Cumulative: Continuous assessment is.

cumulative since any decision to be made at any point in time on the pupils takes into account all previous decisions about him. This requires the keeping of up-to-date or cumulative records on each pupil.

d. Guidance Oriented: Continuous assessment is guidance oriented because information obtained is used to guide his further development.

Advantages of Continuous Assessment

1. Teacher Involvement

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching/learning process. This makes it necessary for teachers to play active role in the final assessment of students. Continuous assessment as envisaged, will provide opportunities for teacher's involvement in this important component of their teaching functions.

2. Minimizing Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice in public examination is the craze for paper qualification and over-emphasis given to the final examination. Therefore, a system of assessment in which performance of the students at all times during the course is taken into account in the award of the external certificate, may reduce the tendency to cheat in examination.

3. Developing Good Study Habit

Students normally read only when examination is fast approaching thus, there is the tendency to cram and keep awake most of the nights during the examinations. If continuous

assessment is properly used, students will be encouraged to learn on a continuous basis. Reading then becomes an aptitude, rather than a means towards success for its sakes.

4. Emphasis on Cognitive and Non-Cognitive

Another notable advantage of continuous assessment is the emphasis on the affective and psychomotor domains of learning. Teachers are expected to assess the performance of the student in the cognitive domain, observe and rate their attitudes to schoolwork, group relations, behaviour in the laboratory interest in the subjects, ability to manipulate equipment, observe procedures and make measurements etc. these are circumstances that lead to the introduction of continuous assessment in the National Policy on Education.

National Policy on Education

One of the distinctive features of the new national policy on education is its emphasis on continuous assessment.

The extract below from the policy illustrate clearly this emphasis

a. Educational assessment and evaluation will be liberalized by basing them in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual. That is philosophy.

b. Primary Education: Convenient plans that progress along the educational cycle will be based on continuous overall guidance-oriented assessment by teachers and headmasters. However, government recognizes the implication of the implementation of such a measure for teachers education and will accordingly ensure that programmes of pre-service teachers education in the teacher training colleges and of in-service training education in the teacher training institute in the institutes of education will incorporate training in the continuous assessment of pupils.

c. Secondary Education: As an interim measure, the present system of a national

common entrance examination will be allowed to continue until the junior secondary school system has taken off. The selection for entry into the secondary schools will as soon as possible, be improved by incorporating headmasters continuous assessment into the common entrance examination result.

d. Teacher Education: The existing practice in most of our institutions of learning of basing the assessment of students work on final examination only is no longer tenable. Continuous assessment based on variety of evaluation techniques should be henceforth adopted, and there should be some means of ensuring some common national standard both in the areas of public examinations as well as in the internal ones. e.

Rational for Advocating Continuous Assessment

a. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching process. It is therefore reasonable that the teacher should be involved in the final assessment of the pupils he or she has taught.

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

c. The readiness of teachers to introduce innovations into their teaching is often frustrated by the fact that a final external examination does not take account of such innovation. In a continuous assessment situation, the teachers assessment of the performance of students on such innovations can become a part of the final assessment. The teacher would therefore be encouraged to be flexible and innovative.

d. An important aspect of instruction is the appropriate guidance of the learner both in his or her learning and preparation for a career, a continuous assessment procedure facilitates such guidance functions schools.

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

Problems of Implementing Continuous Assessment

- a. Comparability of standards
- b. Record-keeping and the continuity of records
- c.

Comparability of Standards

The major difficulty arises from two main sources:

- i. Different in the quality of test and other assessment instruments used in different schools,
- ii. Differences in the procedures for scoring and grading the various assessment instruments in the various schools.

Record-Keeping and the Continuous of Record

For continuous assessment to be meaningful, there has to be meticulous keeping of accurate records on each pupils, since the records are expected to be cumulative from class to class and from school to school, there is need for uniformity in the kinds of records kept and the format for keeping such records.

Recommendations

Continuous assessment is an important aspect of the school system that must be given a serious consideration in school administration. The following recommendation should be considered for effectiveness. 1. The concept of continuous assessment, its modalities and techniques, must be made a core subject in the curriculum of institutions responsible for training teachers.

- 2. Serving teachers must be involved in intensive and regular in-service programmes such as induction courses, seminars and workshops.
- 3. A classroom should not have more than 30 students and no teacher should be allowed to teach more than three classes. This will help to reduce workload.
- 4. The teachers in the school system should endeavour to keep and maintain all assessment data.
- 5. Schools should employ the services of counsellors to attend to students with learning, career, or personality problems, A uniform procedure should be maintained for planning, constructing, administering and reporting tests and their scores.
- 7. School should be properly funded and all necessary test materials must be made available in advance.
- 8. Adequate storage facilities must be made available for records to be kept for a longer period for example, the use of computers for storage. A unit should be created specifically for continuous assessment in all the schools.
- 9. All the teachers must be trained in continuous assessment skills.

Conclusion

Continuous assessment has not been given a serious attention in almost all higher institutions in the country today. This has led many students to disregard it as part of the examination in the school system. From the recommendations given above and if properly put into consideration, it is hoped and believed that continuous assessment will play significant role in helping the students develop the interest in carrying out research in different areas that will help to broaden their horizon and also help to stabilize the school system.

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Eregie Edo Austin
Dept. of Educational Administration
College of Education, Ekiadolor

And
Ojeikere reacheal Onto
Dept, of Economics Education,
College of Education) Ekiadolor