



THE SIGNIFICANT OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract.

The choice of any good teaching method in Nigerian Primary School has been subsequently considered to be important in promotion and development of Continuous Assessment in teaching and learning situation. It is based on this background that this paper seeks to examine the meaning of continuous assessment, rationale behind the introduction of continuous assessment, characteristics of continuous assessment, problems associated with the operation of continuous assessment, suggested solutions and tools used. This paper equally focuses on the responsibilities of the various educational development plan, as well as monitoring its implementation for quality teaching /learning situation. The paper also made some recommendations, conclusion and way forward for a successful achievement in Nigerian Primary Schools.

Keywords: *Significant, Nigerian, Assessment, Primary School, Way forward.*

Introduction

Anyone familiar with contemporary issues on Nigerian education will hardly fail to note the frequent criticism that the educational system is too much oriented towards eternal examinations. It is further asserted that this kind of orientation does not only constitute a major obstacle to the development of a creative teaching learning situation in the classroom, it also has a negative effect on the promotion of reflective thinking since it over-emphasises learning by rote Turton (2004).

Similarly, the paper centres on the meaning of continuous assessment, rationale behind the introduction of continuous assessment in Nigerian Primary Schools, characteristics of continuous assessment identified, problems associated with

the operation of continuous assessment, suggested solutions to the problems and tools used, conclusion and recommendations or way forward form part of the study.

MEANING OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT.

Continuous assessment (CA) has several shades of meaning as defined by different authors, Host and Bloomfield (2008) defined continuous assessment as the systematic collection of marks or grades over a period of time and their aggregation into a final grade.

The national steering committee in continuous assessment in Nigerian schools regard continuous assessment as a method of ascertaining what pupils gain from schooling in terms of knowledge, industry and character development, taking into account all his learning experiences weekly, monthly, termly and yearly or such a term as a week, month term, year or entire period of the student's course Sambo (2014).

Ipaye (2010) concurs with the definition of the certificate of secondary school education on Board in Britain that continuous assessment is a process which deliberately allows for periodic assessment throughout the course and takes into account progress toward the goal and success in reaching it.

Yoloye (2013) views continuous assessment as a method of evaluating the progress and achievement of student or pupil in educational institution. It aims to get the truest picture of each pupil's ability, at the same time helping each student to develop his abilities to the fullest. It is a method whereby the final grading of pupils takes into account, in a systematic way, their whole performance during a given period of schooling.

Continuous assessment is a mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of behaviour systematically takes account of all his performances during a given period of schooling, such an evaluation involves the use of a great variety of modes of evaluation purpose of guiding and improving the learning and performance of the student (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 1985).

Similarly, by seeing the different definitions of continuous assessment stated by different authors on the significant of continuous assessment in Nigerian primary schools, this leads to rationale behind the introduction of continuous assessment in Nigerian Primary Schools.

RATIONALE BEHIND THE INTRODUCTION OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

Anyone familiar with contemporary issues on Nigerian education, will hardly fail to note the frequent criticism that the educational system is too much oriented

towards external examinations led to the introduction of continuous assessment in Nigerian schools.

In criticizing the system, Denga (2014) noted that, it increases the psychological strain and stresses as a “one-short” examination, which leads to examination leakages, malpractices, rote learning and mistaken judgements of a person’s actual abilities by teachers, parents and school administrators.

In his contribution, Okon (2009) emphasized that the abolition of a “one-short” examination at the end of primary education in this country, therefore strongly calls for the use of a variety of objective and subjective personal, psychological and social data about each pupil to better understand himself/her as well as assist him/her to understand himself/herself.

To educationists, however, the most revolutionary aspect of the National policy is the insistence that pupil evaluation at the terminal stages of each level of the system was to incorporate continuous assessment. This new feature (continuous assessment), was received with a sense of relief, because it will henceforth become an integral part of school evaluation and certification of pupils.

The system has been liberated from a pupil assessment based only on a single, final, backward looking examination which assessed only one aspect of a pupil, that is his academic prowess and ignored those of the whole person such as character, attitudes, interests and physical skills which are in practice, the major determinants of a person’s worth in life.

Another rationale for advocating continuous assessment is that teacher’s readiness to introduce innovations into their teaching is often frustrated by the fact that a final external examination does not take account of such innovations. In a continuous assessment situation, the teacher’s assessment of the performance of pupils on such innovations can become a part of the final assessment, this lead us to the characteristics of continuous assessment in Nigerian primary schools.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT.

Based on the various definitions stated by different authors in the introduction, the below are some of the features of continuous assessment according to Yoloye (2012) Viz:

Comprehensiveness.

Continuous assessment is comprehensive because it does not only measure the outcome of instruction in terms of achievement but it also measures other aspects like the affective and the psychomotor domains. Similarly, it is also comprehensive in the sense that many types of

instruments are used in determining the performance, these include tests, projects, assignments, questionnaires and interviews.

Cumulative.

Continuous assessment is cumulative because all assessment information about a given child from the day he enters upon a course of study up to any decision about the child at any point in time takes cognizance of all the assessment information up to that time. Any decision on any child is not therefore based on a single examination as is almost the case now.

Guidance oriented.

Continuous assessment is guidance oriented because information obtained is used to guide his further development. In other words, information obtained from planned and frequent administration of the variety of test in a continuous assessment, practice can be very useful in guiding the child in the right part of learning not only in the cognitive outcomes but also in the affective and psychomotor areas.

Systematic.

Continuous assessment is systematic in the sense that things are planned before being implemented. For example at what time intervals should tests, assignments, projects and exams be given? Should test be given weekly, monthly, yearly etc?. This helps pupils to plan weekly at what time they will be given such tests, assignments etc. this enables us to identify problems associated with the operation of continuous assessment in Nigerian primary schools and look for suggested solutions.

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE OPERATION OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT.

According to Sambo (2012), a lot of problems are associated with the successful operation of continuous assessment, among which are the following;

- For the fact teachers assess their pupils, it is difficult to know if the standards of all assessments are uniform. There may be personal biases in recording the grades apart from the technical problems of differences in the difficulty levels of the assessment instruments and in the grading procedure.
- Collective performance of each pupil over a long period is needed to get a final assessment; therefore, accurate records must be kept. As such, the system demands extra effort on the part of the teacher

not only to use a larger number of assessments but also to keep copious records.

- Technical problems are inevitable due to differences of scales in combining scores from different assessments.

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS ON HOW TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE OPERATION OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

Yoloye (1984) suggested these measures on how to overcome the problems of continuous assessment which include the following:

- Syllabus should be uniform in all schools.
- Uniform procedure for planning, constructing and grading of tests and other assessment instruments adopted by teachers.
- A uniform system of record keeping should be adopted from school to school.
- The uniform system of weighting scores from different assessments should be used from school to school.
- Scores should be converted into some standard scores.
- A system of monitoring standards from school to school and the performance of the entire educational system should be worked out and implemented periodically.

TOOLS USED IN CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT.

The tools required for continuous assessment include variety of test and non-test techniques appraisal. Continuous assessment must be valid, reliable and usable in the sense that the tests to be used must measure what it is supposed to measure as well as give consistent results from one occasion to another. One of the most frequent used measures of continuous assessment includes test scores drawn from the client's cognitive processes. The most popularly known tests include achievement, aptitude and intelligence tests. These tests are used by the guidance counsellor for placing pupils in certain educational levels, planning remedial programmes for weak pupils for prediction and evaluation.

Scores got from test techniques form of appraisal become more meaningful as the records of continuous assessment at the cognitive level are available. The development pattern of the client's cognitive attribute could be easily observed on charts and record patterns. The aptitude and intellectual ability scores

coupled with other interest scores could be used in guiding the child according to his abilities and interests.

The checklist is another type of observational tool, it consists of groups or series of items that cover or describe various types of activities. In constructing a checklist, the constructor makes a comprehensive as possible a listing of steps or behaviours under each indented category, and the pupil completes the list by checking items, characteristics or traits that are present.

There are other non-test methods of appraisal e'g use of cumulative records, case studies, observational techniques, inventories, school clubs and societies. Rating scales constitute use in schools in the area of personal-social adjustment e'g children can be rated on characteristics such as punctuality, neatness, politeness, cooperativeness, cheerfulness while checklist could be used for counselling and identifying pupils with adjustment, academic and social problems Sambo (2015).

Conclusion.

There is need for school personnel to use a reliability of methods and techniques that can help pupils to understand their personal – characteristics – abilities, interests, values, aptitudes and personality, one of such methods or techniques is continuous assessment. This will in no doubt help teachers and other school personnel to better understand each pupil in order to guide him or her more effectively, and this becomes necessary because of the frequent criticism of the old system of education that was too much oriented toward external examinations at the expense of practical skills.

WAY FORWARD/RECOMMENDATIONS.

The following recommendations/way forward could be found useful on the significant of continuous assessment in Nigerian primary schools.

- Syllabus should be uniform in all schools.
- Teachers of all primary level should be oriented on how to fill continuous assessment dossiers by attending workshops, conferences, symposium, seminars etc in the nationwide.
- A uniform system of record keeping should be adopted from school to school.
- A system of monitoring standards from school to school and the performance of the entire educational system should be worked out, supervised with the support of other educational stakeholders and implemented periodically in the country.

- The three (3) tiers of governments i'e Local, State and Federal should provide enough funds to buy more tools for the operation of the exercise in primary schools.

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