A Handbook on Evaluation Research

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to all those who are hungry for genuine education and will conduct evaluation research.

Chapter Three

Continuous Assessment as an Instrument for Achieving Learning Objectives

A.O.U.Onuka

Introduction

The National Policy on Education (2004) began its introduction by stating that 'Education in Nigeria is an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development' (one of the goals of education in Nigeria). 'Education is the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities, and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society', it further states. Some of the other goals are: inculcating the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, and the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around one. In order to attain these laudable goals of education, the policy states: *inter alia*: educational activities shall be centred on the learner for maximum self-development and self-fulfilment; ***educational assessment and evaluation shall be liberalized by their being based in whole or in part on Continuous Assessment of the progress of the individual*** etc. pp 6-7.

Yoloye (1991) points out that continuous assessment (CA) is only a part of the field of educational evaluation. He further states that CA is "a method of evaluating the progress and achievement of students in educational institutions". Its purpose, according to him, is to get the most honest possible picture of each student's ability while it strives to help the student to develop his utmost abilities. It is thus, a systematic process. The scores from continuous assessment are used to find what learning objectives learners have attained. Scores from CA, thus, help the teacher to identify students' difficulties and help him to master those things he is yet to master. CA also helps the teacher to assess his own performance and the effectiveness of his teaching in order to improve himself and consequently his own performance. As part of CA in the school system, teachers are expected to watch the personality development of the student in terms of character, temperament, interest, attitude, adjustments. They

are expected to use a variety of instruments to effectively measure students' traits/characteristics and the results are used to assist the students to improve themselves. In essence, CA implementation helps to build the total man of the student (Yoloye, 1991). Yoloye (1991) states that the desirability of CA expresses itself in the fact that assessment is part of the teaching process. This assertion corroborates the National Policy on Education (2004). It is also for career guidance, and helps the teacher to assess himself and his performance. When incorporated in the final grading of the student, it could help curb all forms of malpractices in examinations.

CA implementation is fraught with the problem of proper record keeping because of its frequency and the large magnitude of data involved. Yet CA could be properly implemented once there are uniform test planning and construction, a uniform syllabus adopted across the country, a uniform system of record keeping and adoption of a uniform system of weighting from CA. However, without acquiring the prerequisite, no amount of preparation and facilities put in place would make it work. It must be noted that CA is not only assessing the achievement of glaring objectives, but also the personality of the students. In spite of the trouble taken to properly implement CA, it was found by a recent study conducted by Umoru-Onuka (2000) that a partially implemented CA has nonetheless improved students' performance. It is understood that examining bodies have to standardize students' scores before they actually incorporate them into the students' overall results. It follows, therefore, that a well-conceived, properly and honestly implemented CA programme will most likely improve both teaching and students' cognitive learning. In the views of Umoru-Onuka (2000) properly and honestly executed CA would in addition improve the entire educational outcomes, particularly learning objectives.

Learning is described as a change in the behaviour of a person due to exposure to a new circumstance he had never experienced before. Learning objectives/ outcomes result from learning experiences that has taken place possibly from a teaching / learning encounter. These learning experiences, according to Ojerinde and Falayajo (1984), should be in the areas of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. These are the areas of thought and academic activities that cover feeling, attitude, belief, character etc. and manipulation and coordination skills. It is also worthy of note that CA essentially covers the three domains of cognitive, affective and

psychomotor, thus, its comprehensiveness and the necessity to implement it on wholesome basis should ensure that its purpose is not defeated. The measurement of these domains by CA cannot, therefore, be over-emphasized, since it makes it a veritable instrument for improving learning objectives / outcomes. But how far is this laudable innovation, in the Nigerian education system, being executive and made effective? According to the National Policy on Education in Nigeria, one of the objectives of CA is to assist in reducing the incidence of examination malpractices. How far has the implementation of CA led to the accomplishment of this objective through the attainment of learning objectives? And if it has not been achieved, what can be done to ameliorate the situation? Thus, every learning experience must have specific or national objectives whose achievement must be evaluated from time to time to keep it on track.

Statement of the Problem

In view of the fact that examination malpractices which the implementation of CA was designed to reduce is still persistent in almost every public examination, the question that agitate the minds of some scholars is whether CA implementation has resulted in the achievement of learning objectives by the learner in our educational system? Thus, this study investigated the extent to which the implementation of CA has taken place in Kogi Central Local Government Area and whether CA has enhanced the achievement of learning objectives in the schools in the area.

Questions

In the light of the above statement of the problem, the following research questions were posed.

1. How much knowledge of the implementation strategies of CA do teachers in Kogi Central Senatorial District possess?
2. To what extent has the implementation of CA taken place in Kogi Central Senatorial District ?
3. To what extent does CA predict achievement in terminal examinations (TE) in Kogi Central Senatorial District?
4. Has the implementation of CA in Kogi Central Senatorial District

psychomotor, thus, its comprehensiveness and the necessity to implement it on wholesome basis should ensure that its purpose is not defeated. The measurement of these domains by CA cannot, therefore, be over-emphasized, since it makes it a veritable instrument for improving learning objectives / outcomes. But how far is this laudable innovation, in the Nigerian education system, being executive and made effective? According to the National Policy on Education in Nigeria, one of the objectives of CA is to assist in reducing the incidence of examination malpractices. How far has the implementation of CA led to the accomplishment of this objective through the attainment of learning objectives? And if it has not been achieved, what can be done to ameliorate the situation? Thus, every learning experience must have specific or national objectives whose achievement must be evaluated from time to time to keep it on track.

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3. To what extent does CA predict achievement in terminal examinations (TE) in Kogi Central Senatorial District?
4. Has the implementation of CA in Kogi Central Senatorial District

helped in achieving the expected cognitive learning objectives by the students?

Scope of the Study

The study covered a sample of 20 schools drawn from the 65 secondary schools in the 5 Local Government Areas (LGA's.) of Kogi Central senatorial district. It covered 200 teachers and 200 students selected on equal basis of 10 from each school in the sample. Another set of 40 and 43 students (two intact classes) were respectively selected for use in a quasi-experimental setting, to test the effect of CA on students' cognitive learning.

Research Procedure

An expost facto research was the main type used in the study because no variable was manipulated in the first phase. In the second phase a pre-test /post-test experimental and control group was equally employed to test for significant difference in achievement as a result of the use of CA in the schools.

Sampling Procedure and Samples.

Multistage sampling procedure was used in this study. First, Kogi state was stratified into three zones of Kogi West, Kogi Central and Kogi East, Kogi Central was purposively selected because it housed the National Iron Ore Mining Company, the Ajaokuta Steel Company and the Federal College of Education, Okene. It was also the commercial nerve centre in the State during the period the study was carried out. The zone was stratified into five sub-zones of Okene, Okehi, Ogori-Magongo, Ajaokuta and Adavi LGAs. Irrespective of the number of schools in each LGA; two schools were randomly selected from each of the LGAs. Forty teachers were also randomly selected from the senior secondary sections of each school. Furthermore, forty students in the sample were randomly selected from Senior Secondary School class two of each school. Forty and Forty-three students were respectively selected from two of the schools to participate in the quasi-experiment.

Two checklists developed by the researcher were used in the study namely: CA Implementation Teacher checklist and CA Implementation Student checklist.

CA Implementation: Teacher Checklist was developed by the researcher, it initially contained 45 items which were reduced to 37 after a panel of six teachers who were involved in the CA implementation as well as some evaluators and trainee evaluators did a critique on its content. The 37 item-checklist was then administered on 30 teachers. The data resulting from the pilot study was computed for reliability by administering it on the same subjects two weeks later. Using the test-retest method, a reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained. Administering the checklist a third time on 30 similar respondents to the first group, the internal validity was obtained. The data from it were correlated with the reliability scores using the Cronbach Alpha (coefficient method), validity co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained.

CA Implementation: Student Checklist is a 16-item instrument. It followed the same process as stated above for Teacher Checklist, except that it was administered twice on the same 40 respondents (test-re-test). The reliability co-efficient obtained from the test-re-test exercise was 0.77, while the validity co-efficient thus obtained was 0.78 (by correlating the data from the latter exercise with the aggregate mean score of the students from the former exercise to obtain the validity co-efficient).

Also, relevant records were examined to verify the level of achievement of learning objectives (cognitively). In addition, a synthesized Teacher - Made Achievement Test (TE) adapted for the study was validated, and it gave a coefficient of 0.74 using Cronbach Alpha analytical method. This additional instrument was used to conduct the pretest and posttest exercises for the experimental and control groups in this study.

Data collection

Data for the study were collected by 5 trained research assistants, who went to four schools each under the supervision and monitoring of the researcher. The instruments were administered and collected the same day because each school was visited one day for that purpose. This was

after an initial and informal visit to the schools by the researcher to elicit the cooperation of the authorities. Relevant records with regards to CA implementation were examined to corroborate the data collected. The scores for the CA were obtained by administering the test instrument on the experimental group while the relevant school records provided both the CA scores and TE scores that were correlated to verify the levels of relationships between CA scores and TE scores.

Data Analysis

They were analysed using percentages, graphs, Pearson product moment correlation and Chi-square to provide answers to the research questions. T-test statistic was also used.

Results and Discussion

The following tables present the results of this study.

Table 1

Summary of Level of Continuous Assessment Implementation by Teachers

S/No	Item: CA Assessment Utilization and Record Keeping	Very Often	Often	Seldom	None
1.	How often do you assess your students?	85 (42.5)	75 (37)	40 (20)	- (0)
2.	How often do you use more than one instrument to assess your students as part of CA?	99 (49.5)	41 (20.5)	40 (20)	- (0)
3.	How often do you assess the cognitive domain of learning of your students?	80 (40)	80(40)	40 (20)	- (0)

S/No	Item: CA Assessment Utilization and Record Keeping	Very Often	Often	Seldom	None
4.	How often do you assess the effectiveness of learning of your students?	92 (46)	80 (40)	28 (14)	- (0)
5.	How often do you assess the psychomotor domain of learning of your students?	80 (40)	80 (40)	26 (13)	14 (7.0)
6.	How often do you utilize the results of CA?	90 (45)	60 (30)	50 (25)	- (0)
7.	How often do you use CA results towards realizing learning objectives	94 (47)	80 (40)	26 (13)	- (0)
8.	How often do you utilize CA results to improve your students' performance?	90 (45)	50 (25)	60 (30)	- (0)
9.	How often do the students use CA results to select combination of subjects compatible with their ability	60 (30)	99 (49.5)	41 (21.5)	- (0)
10.	How often do students come to ask questions about how they can improve on performance?	85(42.5)	75(37.5)	40(20)	-(0)
11.	How often do you keep records of your students CA results in all the domains	80 (40)	60 (30)	60 (30)	- (0)
12.	How often do you draw the attention of students to their CA results?	99 (49.5)	41 (20.5)	60 (30)	- (0)
13.	How often do you draw parents' attention to these records?	80 (40)	80 (40)	40 (20)	- (0)

S/No	Item: Knowledge of Types of Assessment Methods	Very Much	Much	Little	None
14.	How much importance do you attach to CA?	82 (41)	78 (39)	40 (5)	(0)
15	How much of the weekly records of students' activities do you keep?	80 (40)	80 (40)	40 (20)	- (0)
16	How much of test construction do you know?	80 (40)	80 (40)	40 (20)	- (0)
17	How much of test do you use in CA?	80 (40)	70 (35)	50 (25)	- (0)
18	How much of affective domain records do you keep?	89 (44.5)	51 (25.5)	60 (30)	- (0)
19	How much of psychomotor activities do you keep?	70 (35)	70 (35)	60 (30)	- (0)
20	How much of project assignment do you give?	81 (40.5)	79 (39.5)	40 (20)	- (0)
21	How much of observational techniques do you know?	77 (38.5)	73 (36.5)	50 (25)	- (0)
22	How much of observations do you use in CA?	93 (46.5)	57 (28.5)	50 (25)	- (0)
23	How much of anecdotal do you know?	79 (38.5)	71 (35.5)	50 (25)	- (0)
24	How much of anecdotal records do you use in CA?	99 (48.5)	70 (35)	31 (15.5)	- (0)
25	How much of interview technique do you know?	99 (48.5)	70 (35)	31 (15.5)	- (0)
26	How much of interview technique do you use in CA	92 (46)	80 (40)	28 (14)	- (0)

S/No	Item: Knowledge of Types of Assessment Methods	Very Much	Much	Little	None
27	How much of sociometric technique do you know?	93 (46.5)	65 (32.5)	42 (21)	- (0)
28	How much of sociometric technique do you use in CA	91 (45.5)	77 (38.5)	32 (16)	- (0)
29	How much of questionnaire technique do you know?	85 (42.5)	75 (37.5)	40 (20)	- (0)
30	How much of questionnaire do you use in CA?	80 (40)	60 (30)	60 (30)	- (0)
31	How much of checklist technique do you know?	99 (49.5)	60 (30)	41 (20.5)	- (0)
32	How much of checklist do you use in CA?	77 (38.5)	75 (37.5)	45 (24)	- (0)
33	How much of inventory technique do you know?	82 (41)	64 (4 (32)	54 (27)	- (0)
34	How much inventory technique do you use in CA?	74 (37)	58 (29)	68 (34)	- (0)
35	How much of rating scale technique do you know?	94 (47)	78 (39)	28 (14)	- (0)
36	How much of rating scale technique do you use in CA?	77 (38.5)	75 (37.5)	48 (24)	- (0)
37	Has the implementation of CA led to achieving learning objectives in the school?	80 (40)	22 (11)	18 (9)	80 (40)

Key

'Very often'/ 'very much' implies at least 3 times. 'Often'/'Much' means not less than 2 times. 'Seldom'/'little' denotes 1 time, while 'None' means nothing at all.

* Percentages are shown in parentheses

Table 1 indicates that CA is carried out in varying degrees in Kogi Central Senatorial District. While some do so more frequently, others do so less frequently and yet others do not at all. From Table 1 it can be inferred that various instruments of CA were employed in assessing the students. These include questionnaires, rating scales, inventory, and checklists in addition to the use of tests. 41% of the teacher respondents attached very much importance to CA, 39% attached much importance, and 5% attached little importance while another 5% attached no importance to CA at all. 40% of the teachers gave feedback on students to their parents on personal basis through discussions very frequently, while 40% claimed they never did, the rest of the respondents claimed they did so frequently. 40% agreed that CA was very effective in the realization of learning objectives while 40% disagreed that it is effective in that direction.

However, the rest agreed that it is effective (in varying degrees) towards accomplishing learning objectives. The other aspects of the implementation of CA are shown in Table 1. All of these results confirm the findings of Onuka and Oludipe (2004) in the same direction. An obvious conclusion that can be made from the findings is that knowledge of a strategy does not necessarily translate to the same level of usage of it. This conclusion can be reached if the responses to the use of the various strategies as indicate by item numbers 25 & 26, 27 & 28, 29 & 30, 31 & 32, 33 & 34, 35 & 36 are carefully examined, where knowledge of the use of each strategy seemed higher that the level of its usage.

Table 2

Summary of Students Responses on Extent of the Implimentation of CA

S/No	Item	Very Much	Much	Little	None
1	How much of CA have you heard in your school?	97 (48.5)	53 (26.5)	50 (25)	- (0)
2	How much of CA do you understand?	83 (41.5)	77 (38.5)	25 (12.5)	- (0)

S/No	Item	Very Much	Much	Little	None
3	How much improvement have you recorded as a result of the use of CA in your school?	77 (38.5)	75 (37.5)	48 (24)	- (0)
4	How much of CA computation is included in your terminal /sessional results?	80 (40)	60 (30)	42 (21)	- (0)
5	How much feed back has been given to you on your attitude towards your study?	78 (39)	22 (11)	60 (30)	- (0)
6	How much feedback has been given to you on sporting activities and practicals you undertake?	68 (34)	92 (46)	40 (20)	- (0)
7	How much has the feedback given you helped you in your study and interactions with your peers?	67 (33.5)	67 (37.5)	60 (30)	6 (3)
8	How much have the information given you on CA helped you with getting the assistance of your parents?	80 (40)	30 (15)	10 (5)	80 (40)

S/No	Item	Very Much	Much	Little	None
9	How much have these CA procedures helped you to understand and apply the knowledge in your subjects?	76 (38)	72 (36)	52 (26)	- (0)
10	How much has the implementation of CA in your school helped to achieve the expected learning objectives?	82 (41)	28 (14)	10 (5)	80 (40)
11	How often have you been given project assignment and feedback?	59 (29.5)	71 (35.5)	70 (35)	- (0)
12	How often were you given class tests in a term?	92 (46)	71 (35.5)	37 (18.5)	- (0)
13	How often have those tests helped to improve you in your subject?	75 (37.5)	77 (38.5)	42 (21)	6 (3)
14	How often were you given feedback on your performance?	58 (29)	59 (29.5)	63 (31.5)	20 (10)
15	How often have you been requested by your teachers to fill forms on your attitudes, interests, extra-curricular activities?	80 (40)	60 (30)	60 (30)	- (0)
16	How often were you informed of the outcomes of these forms?	78 (39)	92 (46)	20 (10)	10 (5)

Table 2 presents the students' responses in percentages with regards to the level of implementation of CA in Kogi Central Senatorial District and on the effectiveness of CA in achieving learning objectives. 41% of the students claimed it was very effective, 28% agreed that it was effective, while 10% felt that it was seldom effective and the remaining 21% did not think it was effective. On the feedback of CA to parents to facilitate assistance from them, 40% said it gets to them very well enough to obtain their assistance, 15% agree it was much, 5% said it was little and 40% felt it was not. 48.5% know very much about CA, 26.5% knew much while 25% claimed little knowledge of CA. This portends the fact that CA was practised in the area covered by the study. 38% of the students understood the import of CA very well, 36% understood it well, and 20% have little understanding. 39% claimed they get feedback very well, 46% said that they got much, 10% got little feedback and 5% did not get any feedback on the questionnaires and other non-cognitive instruments used in assessing them.. Evidently, there is a comprehensive implementation and feedback for the improvement of the education system for the accomplishment of effective learning of objectives according to the students. This corroborates the findings of Onuka and Oludipe (2004).

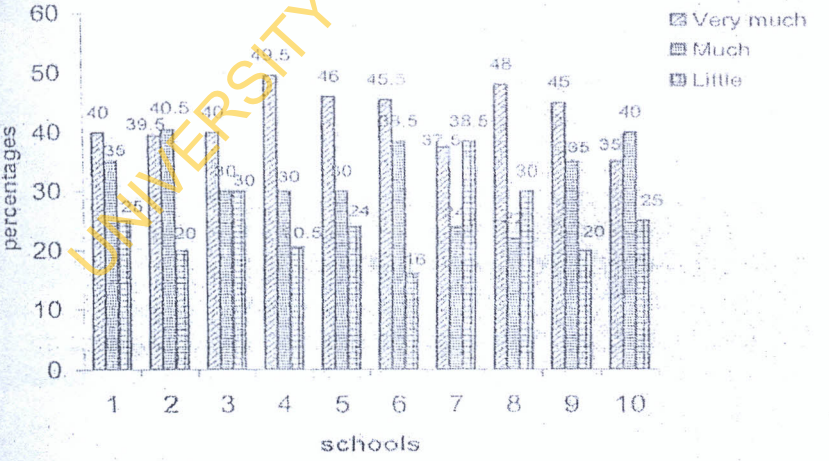

Fig. 1: C A Implementation strategies

The graph in Fig. 1, indicates the level of application of different strategies that is, the various instruments (on the aggregate) in implementing CA in the schools. It is evident that the teachers are conversant with the various strategies adopted in executing CA as indicated in the handbook for CA implementation in our schools. There is the need to increase the skill of using these strategies in order to enhance absolutely the rationale of examining bodies in using them in computing certificate examination results.

The following result shows the extent to which CA test predicted terminal examination results in the selected schools. The correlation coefficients in Table 3 show that CA significantly predicted the terminal examination results of the students in varying degree which confirmed the earlier results presented in this study that the implementation of CA if properly handled, and timely feedback given on it, can significantly improve attainment of learning objectives. This is so because there is a high relationship between CA and TE.

Table 3

Correlation Between CA And Achievement In Terminal Examination

Schools	Correlation coefficient
A	0.95*
B	0.86*
C	0.69*
D	0.97*
E	0.79*
F	0.78*
G	0.93*
H	0.59*
I	0.87*
J	0.94*

*Significant at 0.01 level two tailed.

Table 4a

Teachers' Assessment of the Level of Achievement of Learning Objectives

No of cases	X^2 Observed	X^2 Critical	Significance
200	154.225	7.82	*

*Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

From the teachers' perspective the result in Table 4a confirms that CA has significantly predicted the achievement of learning objectives in the school system in Kogi Central.

Table 4b.

Students' Assessment of the Level of Achievement of Learning Objectives

No of cases	Df	X^2 Obs	X^2Criti	Significance
200		115.191	7.82	*

*Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table 4b illustrates the degree, which intended learning had been attained as a result of the implementation of CA in the zone as perceived by the students. Table 4b shows that the realization level was significant. This, corroborates the teachers' assessment of the effect of the implementation of CA on the achievement of learning objectives.

There was also the evidence that there was substantial execution and utilisation of CA in the school system. In a comparative study carried out during the exercise, a quasi- experiment was done to compare a control group to an experimental group. The results showed that there was a significant gain by the experimental group over the control group as follows:

Table 5

T-Test Comparison of Students on Pre-Test, Post-Test and Gain Scores

Test	Treatment group	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Pre-test	(a) Experimental	40	51.70	3.22	1.455 NS
	(b) Control	43	51.00	3.21	
Post-test	(a) Experimental	40	57.10	3.11	4.225*
	(b) Control	43	52.50	3.71	
Gain	(a) Experimental	40	2.75	1.14	14.789*
	(b) Control	43	2.15	1.03	

* Significant at 0.05 probability level
NS Not significant at 0.05 probability level.

Table 5 shows that the experimental group which enjoyed feedback through the use of CA gained significantly as opposed the students who did not enjoy the use of feedback mechanism during the course of the research.

Discussion of Findings

It is quite clear from the findings of this study that a substantial number of the teachers who participated in the study knew very much about CA and its importance. These teachers also use it as well as are aware of the fact that CA assist in putting students on the track to achieving greater heights in their academics. This is so because on the average 85% of the teachers know very much / much about CA, and apply it in their teaching efforts. An average of 80% use it frequently to ensure that they and the students were doing their best in order to realize the set learning objectives in each subject area. Many of them (as much as 75%) use the various instruments to carry out CA.

The graphical illustration further shows that all the teachers employ various instruments to assess CA implementation but at different levels. On the average, it shows that not less than 70% of the teachers apply them either very frequently or frequently. These findings conform to the

views of Obemeata (1984), Roy-Macauley (1988) and Umoru-Onuka (2000) that feedback mechanism helps to realize the objective of an educational programme resulting in the realization of learning by the student.

However, while as much as 60% meet with parents in varying frequency to discuss their children's academics with them, 40% did not bother about it as they did not consider it necessary to do so. 40% of the students equally believe that their teachers never drew the attention of their parents to their academic performance. 60% of the teachers and the students respectively agreed that CA was effective in realizing learning objectives, while the remaining 40% of both sets of respondents disagreed on this. The findings between the correlation of CA with terminal examination, however, confirmed that CA actually predicted achievement in learning objectives as determined by terminal examination.

This relationship, (of over 0.75) between CA and TE was further confirmed by the X^2 test which was significant in achievement of learning objectives as a result of the implementation of CA in schools. The reason for these findings may have been due to the fact that CA deals with the total man as it is not restricted to cognitive measures alone. The measurement of the affective and psychomotor domains could help the person understand his ability better and is thus able to take advantage of the knowledge to create an academic niche for him or herself.

Conclusion

This study has been able to show that if CA were consistently applied in the school system, it would result in an enhanced performance of students and of course of the teachers, as both groups would strive to perform better. This is because the teacher would discover his own area of weaknesses and strive to ameliorate them while the students and their parents would also discover the weaknesses of their wards and also strive to overcome them for the good of the students and by extension that of the school system. An objective application of CA in the school system would help in no small measure towards accomplishing learning objectives and restoring greater confidence in the school system and in the certificates issued. Enhanced performance of the students would culminate in the reduction of incidences of examination malpractices, as students would have been well prepared ahead of the terminal examinations through

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constant application of CA,

If a data-base is created in every school and the programme is properly managed, parents could be encouraged to access their wards results on line, in order to effectively monitor their progress. This would, thus, help them to ameliorate any weakness detected in their wards on time, so as to engender better achievement of the cognitive learning objectives in Nigerian schools.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study the following recommendations are hereby made:

That regular training, seminars / workshops should be constantly organised for the teachers to update their knowledge of the processes involved in implementation of CA to further engender the realization of learning objectives, as room still exist for improvement.

That parents be educated on the use of CA in enhancing the performance of their wards and in the realization of learning objectives.

More funds should be made available to the school system to assist in creating the relevant environment for engendering the use of CA to accomplish learning objectives.

Zonal Inspectors of Education should visit the schools in their zone without notice to ensure that CA is constantly used to realize learning objectives, while principals should ensure that proper records of CA in all its ramifications are used and properly kept.

Government should ensure that every school in the zone has at least one guidance counselor to ensure that the results of CA are utilized to assist students perform better in order to realize learning objectives set in various subjects.

The entire record-keeping of the school system should be computerized and a programmer be appointed for each school who will keep the students' assessment records so as to facilitate the processing of CA.

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