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CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT PRACTICE IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

Continuous assessment practice was introduced into the Nigerian educational system about the year 1978. Since the inception of this assessment practice, it has come under various criticisms, especially in its conduct by teachers and the various schools concerned. From around 1998, continuous assessment scores from secondary schools were utilized by public examination bodies like WAEC and NECO as part of the final assessment of students for May/June senior school certificate examination on a ratio of 30:70 i.e. 30% for continuous assessment from schools and 70% from students' performance in SSCE. As a result of the utilization of continuous assessment scores from schools, there have been reported irregularities among public and private schools in the conduct of this assessment. This paper therefore, investigated the practice of continuous assessment in public and private secondary schools in Lagos State. The study is an ex-post-facto and the instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. Simple percentage was used for data analysis.

Findings from the study reveal that there is disparity in the practice of continuous assessment among schools in Lagos State. It was discovered that while some schools allocate 50% mark to continuous assessment and 50% to terminal

examination, other schools allocate 10% mark to continuous assessment and 90% to terminal examination. The study also revealed that continuous assessment practice in Lagos State is mostly centered on the cognitive domain of learning as against the practice of taking into cognizance other domains of learning, affective and psychomotor.

The study, therefore, recommends that continuous assessment should be made to cover the three domains of learning. Also, there should be uniformity in marks allocated to continuous assessment by schools. Furthermore, the study also recommends that regular training on continuous assessment should be organized for teachers at the secondary school level.

Introduction

Background to the Study

Since the introduction of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WAEC) by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) in 1998, the continuous assessment and its practices has become an integral part of the final assessment of school leavers. This is because the West African Examinations Council and perhaps, other public examining bodies like the National Examinations Council (NECO), base students final assessment on a ratio of 30% from continuous assessment and 70% from candidates performance in the Senior School Certificate Examination.

The essence of the 30:70 ratio is to allow teachers, who prepare candidates for the Senior School Certificate Examinations to be part of their final assessment. Hence, continuous assessment scores from teachers on the candidates are submitted through the school authorities to the examination bodies at the point of registering the candidates for the examination. It is a known fact that public examining bodies do not prepare candidates for their examinations. They extract

the syllabus from the national curriculum and hand it over to teachers to implement. Therefore, the teachers prepare candidates for such examinations with the syllabus, they assist the examining bodies to generate the test items, and also supervise the examinations as well as examine candidates' performance in such examinations. It would therefore, be unfair if the teacher is not part of the final assessment of the school leavers.

Emphasizing the importance of continuous assessment, the 4th edition of the National Policy on Education (2004) states that "*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*" Section 1.9g

Ojerinde and Falayajo (1984) sees continuous assessment 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. Osokoya and Odinko (2005) revealed that continuous assessment is a mechanism whereby the final grade of a child at the end of a week or a term or session of primary school education (or any other level of education) in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour systematically takes into account all the performance of the child during the given period. Iwuji (1997), on the other hand, opined that continuous assessment in education is a systematic and comprehensive process of identifying students' potentials in his cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains with a view to helping him develop these for effective social and economic functioning with the society's modern culture. The implication of Iwuji's definition is that continuous assessment does not serve academic purposes only but also serves development and manifestation of socially desired characters outside the school environment.

Furthermore, the Lagos Eko Project training manual for English Language (2010) defines continuous assessment as a systematic, comprehensive and guidance-oriented procedure of finding out the over-all gains that a student has made in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills after a given set of learning experiences. Here, systematic means that continuous assessment should be done weekly on every topic taught or lesson presented; comprehensive means that it should cover the three domains of learning as pointed out in almost all the definitions considered in this paper; guidance-oriented states that continuous assessment scores should be used to guide students in the learning process i.e. the scores should be used to predict students' performance in the final assessment as well as their choice of career later in life.

Since continuous assessment covers the three domains of learning, the training manual concluded that several evaluation tools namely; teacher-made tests, standardized tests, oral questions, discussion, projects, direct classroom observation, assignments, questionnaires, interviews and so on should be used to cater for aspects of learning (in all domains). Therefore, continuous assessment is called continuous assessment because it should be conducted in a continuous and progressive manner to provide all kinds of useful information about each learner's progress in school. The table below shows the various evaluation instruments that can be used to conduct continuous assessment in the three domains of learning:

Table 1.1 Table Showing various Evaluation Instruments for various domains of Learning.

S/N	EVALUATION TOOLS	COGNITIVE	AFFECTIVE	PSYCHOMOTOR
1	Tests	√		
2	Projects	√	√	√
3	Assignments	√	√	√
4	Interviews		√	

5	Rating scales	√	√
6	Observation	√	√
7	Questionnaire	√	
8	Anecdotal Records	√	
9	Sociometrics	√	

Source: Ughamadu, K.A. (1991)

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Continuous assessment is expected to cover the three domains of learning, mainly the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor domains. But in practice, it appears as if it is only the cognitive domain that is assessed because teachers tend to utilize only the teacher-made test to conduct continuous assessment. This is rather “cognitive assessment”, thus the affective and psychomotor domains of learning are hardly assessed in the learning process. This practice tends to result in the production of half baked school leavers, especially in character and moral development.

The reasons for the continuous neglect of the affective and psychomotor domains in the continuous assessment process includes the fact that (1) students’ report cards in Nigeria are designed to assess the cognitive domain mainly. Teachers thus find it difficult to assess the other two domains because they are almost excluded/less emphasized in the report cards; (2) there is no course called “continuous assessment” in teacher training institutions and programmes in Nigeria. Thus, people qualify as teachers and are employed to teach with inadequate knowledge of continuous assessment practices.

This study, therefore, investigated the practice of continuous assessment in public and private secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

Attempts were made to provide answers to the following research questions.

- i. Should the continuous assessment score be added to the students' terminal (summative) score?
- ii. What percentage of the students' final score in a term should be allocated to continuous assessment?
- iii. How should continuous assessment practices be organized?
- iv. Are there sufficient training on continuous assessment practices for teachers in Nigerian schools?

Population

The population for this study comprised all the teachers in both government and privately owned secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling

The sample for this study comprise of 250 secondary school teachers which were drawn through simple random sampling technique from 30 secondary schools in four Local Government Areas of Lagos State.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire was used by the researchers for data collection. The questionnaire had two sections. Section A is on the bio-data of the respondents while section B contains items on continuous assessment practices.

Data Analysis

The data generated for this study was analyzed in tables, using descriptive statistics like percentage.

RESULTS

Research Question One

Should the continuous assessment score be added to the students' terminal score?

Table 2

RESPONSE	NO	%
YES	225	90
NO	10	4
Total	235	94

Table 2 shows that 225 (90%) of the 250 respondents agreed that the continuous assessment scores should be part of students final assessment while 10(4%) disagreed. Six (6%) percent were neutral on the issue.

Research Question Two

What percentage of the students' final score in a term should be allocated to continuous assessment?

Table 3

Items	10 %	% of R	20 %	% of R	30 %	% of R	40 %	% of R	50 %	% of R
What percentage do you allocate to C.A in your school	--	--	10	4%	10	4%	210	84%	20	8%
What percentage do you allocate to Cognitive Domain	55	22%	110	44%	--	--	--	--	--	--
What percentage do you allocate to Affective	105	42%	45	18%	--	--	--	--	--	--

Domain										
What percentage do you allocate to Psychomotor Domain	120	48%	25	10%	--	--	--	--	--	--

Table 3 provides answers to research question two. The table shows that no school allocates 10% to continuous assessment. Ten respondents (4%) said that they allocate 20% to continuous assessment in their schools; while the same proportion of respondents allocates 30% to continuous assessment. Two hundred and ten (84%) of the respondents allocate 40% to continuous assessment in their schools while twenty (8%) indicated that they allocate 50% to continuous assessment.

Also, from the same table, fifty-five of the respondents (22%) allocate 10% to cognitive domain, while one hundred and ten (44%) allocate 20% to cognitive domain in their continuous assessment practices. One hundred and five (42%) allocate 10% to the affective domain while forty-five (18%) allocate 20% to the affective domain in their continuous assessment practices, whereas, one hundred and twenty (48%) allocate 10% to the psychomotor domain while twenty-five (10%) allocate 20% to the psychomotor domain in their continuous assessment practices.

Research Question Three

How should continuous assessment practices be organized?

Item I: Do you have Continuous Assessment format in your school?

Table 4.1

RESPONSE	NO	%R
YES	190	76%

NO	60	24%
Total	250	100%

Table 4.1 shows that one hundred and ninety (76%) of the respondents have continuous assessment formats in their schools while sixty (24%) do not have format for continuous assessment practices in their schools.

Item II: How many times do you conduct Continuous Assessment in a term? 🖱

Table 4.2

RESPONSE	NO	%R
One Time	10	4%
Two Times	100	40%
Three Times	55	22%
Four Times	50	20%
Total	215	86%

Table 4.2 shows that ten (4%) respondents conduct continuous assessment once in their schools in a term. One hundred (40%) respondents conduct continuous assessment twice in a term in their schools. Fifty-five (22%) conduct continuous assessment three times in a term in their schools; while fifty (20%) of the respondents practice continuous assessment four times in a term in their schools. Thirty-five (14%) did not respond to the item.

Item III: Who collates Continuous Assessment scores in your school?

Table 4.3

RESPONSE	NO	%R
Class Teacher	165	66%
Subject Teacher	80	32%
Principal	5	2%

Total	250	100%
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Table 4.3 reveals that continuous assessment scores are collated by the class teachers in one hundred and five (66%) of the schools studied; it is collated by the subject teachers in eighty (32%) schools while the principals collate continuous assessment scores in five schools (2%).

Item IV: What instruments do you use for Continuous Assessment conduct?

Table 4.4

RESPONSE	NO	%R
Test	120	48%
Assignment	70	28%
Practical	5	2%
Total	195	78%

Table 4.4 shows that one hundred and twenty (or 48%) of the respondents use test to conduct continuous assessment in their schools. Seventy (or 28%) use assignment; while five (or 2%) adopt practicals. About fifty-five (or 22%) did not respond to the item.

Item V: Do you have guidance counselor in your school?

Table 4.5

RESPONSE	NO	%R
YES	175	70%
NO	75	30%
No Private	40	16%
No Govt.	35	14%

From table 4.5 one hundred and seventy-five (70%) of the total respondents has Guidance Counselor in their schools; while seventy-five (30%) do not have Guidance Counselor in their schools. Out of the schools that do not have Guidance

Counselor, Forty (16%) are privately owned; while thirty-five (14%) are owned by the government.

Item VI: Do new students in your school bring their Continuous Assessment report before admission?

Table 4.6

RESPONSE	NO	%R
YES	95	38%
NO	140	56%
Total	235	94%

Table 4.6 shows that only ninety-five (38%) of the schools studied request for students' continuous assessment report before the students are admitted to their (respondents) schools; while one hundred and forty (56%) do not request for students' continuous assessment report on admission. Fifteen (6%) of the respondents did not respond to the item.

Research Question Four

Are there sufficient training on continuous assessment practices for teachers in Nigeria schools?

Item VII: Have you attended training on Continuous Assessment practices before?

Table 5

RESPONSE	NO	%R
YES	75	30%
NO	175	70%
Total	250	100%

From table 5, we see that only seventy-five (or 30%) of the respondents have attended training on continuous assessment practices, while a total of one hundred and seventy-five (or 70%) of the respondents have not attended any form of training on continuous assessment practices.

Discussion of Findings

Continuous assessment should be a part of the general final grading of students. This is in line with Babafemi (2007) who concluded that WAEC does not use continuous assessment scores in the final grading of candidates. Also, Taylor (2003) in Okonkwo (2003) posits that continuous assessment covers certain aspects of behaviour which certification examinations do not assess. It is necessary to use students' continuous assessment in their final grading mainly because of important characteristics of continuous assessment which are systematic, comprehensive and guidance oriented. It is clear that continuous assessment serves formative purposes in the teaching and learning process. Continuous assessment is comprehensive when it covers the three domains of learning and the result/scores are utilized by both the school counselors and subject teachers to provide counseling services, career guide as well as remediation on the students' weak areas.

It was also discovered that most schools allocate between 40% and 50% to continuous assessment. This is similar to the report of Mghor and Mghor (2003) that schools in Edo and Delta states of Nigeria distribute continuous assessment scores to the three domains of learning on the basis of 20% to cognitive domain; 10% to affective domain; and 20% to psychomotor domain. This is wrong as the percentage scores should be distributed among the three domains of learning on 10-10-10 basis to arrive at 30% for continuous assessment. Continuous assessment should not be conducted only twice. Since the scheme of work shows the topics to be taught on weekly basis, continuous assessment should be done weekly, using various instruments to cover the three domains of learning.

On collation of continuous assessment scores, all hands must be on deck. The subject teachers should collate the various assessments scores in their subjects and submit to the

class teachers. The class teachers should then collate all assessment scores from all subject teachers, prepare the broad sheet, and pass to the school counselor for counseling aspect of continuous assessment. The school authorities should then take necessary decisions on the progress or otherwise of the students. The school principal should collate the continuous assessment scores of the students in examination classes from their senior secondary one (SS1) to the point of registering for public examinations and submit to desired examination public bodies. This will enable the relevant bodies to fill the thirty percent continuous assessment quota of the final grading of the students as they leave secondary school.

Recommendations

1. Continuous assessment of students should cover the three domains of learning. Assessing the affective domain leads to character development which is lacking in most societies today. Assessment in the psychomotor domain leads to development of good writing skills.
2. Further training should be organized for teachers on how to develop instruments for continuous assessment in the three domains of learning. This has also been recommended by Osunde and Ughamadu (2003). They opined that participation in such training should be assessed at the end of training to find out the extent to which they have imbibed the training materials and that the participants should be certified as evidence that they have undergone training in continuous assessment.
3. School authorities should always request for continuous assessment report on students seeking transfer and admission to their school. Such report will help the school and teachers for that matter to know

where to place such a student and how to carry him/her along.

4. Continuous Assessment should be introduced as a compulsory course with reasonable credit units in teacher training programmes in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This paper investigated continuous assessment practices in Nigerian secondary schools with a view to identifying how the practice can be better enhanced. It is the belief of the authors that if continuous assessment is sincerely and meticulously implemented to cover the three domains of learning, then Nigerian Secondary Schools will produce school leavers who are found worthy in character and learning.

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