

Review paper

The Effectiveness of Continuous Assessment as an Innovative Mechanism for Efficiency in Learning and Teaching

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ABSTRACT: In human societies, there is scarcely any field of human endeavor in which education is not required. If the benefit is not directly applied, the residue can indirectly contribute to efficiency in a system. The performance of the system may require periodic review for improved productivity. This underscores the introduction of continuous assessment as a mechanism for performance evaluation in schools. This work establishes the rationale for the adoption of the scheme. Every scheme crafted by man has its own pitfalls. Continuous assessment has its own drawbacks too, which the work establishes. Be that as it may, there are high points. Thereafter, recommendations are made for improvement and sustainability.

Keywords: Assessment, system, review sustainability, summative

INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1982, there was no discussion of continuous assessment in educational parlance because stakeholders, teachers, and students were accustomed to one-shot summative evaluation (Eze, 2008) subject by subject. This was normally done at the end of the year to promote or celebrate the conclusion of a course of study and the certification of graduates.

Because Nigeria maintained a certificate-oriented form of education, it was not difficult to detect gross wrongdoing in the process because practically everyone desired enhanced certificates to boost their chances of job acquisition or admission opportunities. The certificate-oriented form of education prioritized book knowledge over skill growth. It created white collar job seekers at the expense of entrepreneurship. It became normal to come across school graduates who couldn't write, read, or do basic math. Children moved from term to term and class to class without a convenient way to track their development. The problem became worse when it became impossible for them to schedule their studies in a

way that was appropriate and remedial. This was the situation that prompted the National Teachers' Institute (2006) to state that the assessment reform is without a doubt unique, given the need to develop a more effective and practical method of assessing, reporting, and evaluating students' progress as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals and the Universal Basic Education Policy. Assessment is so important that the Federal Ministry of Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2017) recommends that all educational assessments be based on continuous assessment at all levels of education. This method of evaluation considers the outcomes of biweekly or monthly tests given by teachers in the final grade of students. More crucially, it considers cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor attitudes/values. As such, it is extensive and diverse. Teachers engage students or pupils in weekly class tests, daily class work, take home assignments, quizzes, and impromptu class exams (whatever is relevant) based on time constraints, program schedules, and

curricular/extracurricular activities, all of which represent forms of assessments. Their intervals are irregular, and the amount of times they occur fluctuates from term to term/semester to term/semester. Interviews, projects, questionnaires, examinations, and other forms of assessment may be used. Scores from each of these can be preserved and recorded on an ongoing basis for future use as a guide to students' or pupils' performances. As previously said, the approach is comprehensive and dependable, always leading to the identification of learners' needs and talents. The data required to create this type of indication is accumulated over time. As a result, it may tell the tale of one's aptitude, strength, and weakness more effectively. The crux of the problem is that in the old mode of evaluation, recordings of class work and weekly tests, for example, were not retained cumulatively for recollection and use. The teacher may not have them readily available for reference purposes, particularly when making judgemental assessments of pupils' or students' performance.

In continuous assessment, the innovation needs the keeping of such performance records in a cumulative manner so that the values and worth of such scores may be used to create the Student's/career pupil's or potentials. The flexibility inherent in the invention encourages the teacher in this situation. In order to adapt to standardized instruments, the innovation includes a method for instructional upgrade/review. This cutting-edge method is accompanied by what are known as common comparable units (Bayo, 2016). A measure of relative standing is the common comparable unit. This is a uniform reporting standard for students'/pupils' performance that allows for easy comparison of standards from school to school, state to state, and zone to zone. Standard scores, commonly expressed in standard deviation units, are included below. In continuous assessment, for example, the T-score and Z-score should be provided in these scales rather than in their raw form (Adole 2017). It is therefore the obligation of proprietors and governments to ensure that teachers are instructed on how to compute and understand the indices (on the job training).

The character of continuous assessment as an innovative tool

Continuous assessments have features that stand it out as an innovative tool. These features typify continuous assessment wherever they are found. These features include:

Cumulative nature

The assessment records are not based on a single, quick assessment. Rather, they are obtained as they are

sought again and over again. As a result, all teachers are encouraged to conduct periodic assessments on their students/pupils in order to analyze all parts of the learners' domain. Every new record acquired considers and accounts for what the previous one says (entails)

Diagnostic nature

Continuous assessment of students'/pupils' progress aids in the identification of their strengths and weaknesses. As a result, pinpointing their causative aspects and dealing with them appropriately becomes much easier. By assisting the weak student in overcoming his or her weaknesses, this aids or enables efficient planning. There may be a need to take certain remedial measures in order to upgrade.

The methodical nature

This form of assessment has a systematic flow due to its periodic and continuous nature. It must flow from one era to the next, from one year to the next, or from one level to the next. It's not something that happens every day. As a result, the building pieces are put together over time to provide a more reliable guidance.

The prognostic nature

Predictions can be made based on the information gathered during the diagnosis of an issue. It is possible to determine what tasks the learner can complete for improvement purposes based on the information provided. Once the source of a problem is identified, finding a remedy is not difficult. Once the reason for a child sleeping in class during class time is identified, efforts can be done to ensure that the child gets enough sleep at night, such as going to bed early.

The comprehensive nature

Continuous assessment considers a variety of factors of a student's school experience, such as attitudes, motivation, regularity, punctuality, neatness, work inclinations, self-perception and esteem, and so on. Data about all of these things, as well as others, can be acquired and stored, ready to be used whenever the need arises.

The official implementation of continuous assessment in our schools in 1980 (Ayoeze 1999) represented a turning point in educational test administration. Teachers who teach students/pupils should be required to participate in their certification because it is an important component of their job.

A teacher who is dedicated to his career and true to his name should be given the opportunity to assess his own educational abilities on a regular basis. By doing so, he will be able to improve his career and satisfy current needs. At the same time as the students/pupils are being evaluated, he/she is being evaluated. The teacher's adaptability, combined with his or her original flair, will significantly improve his or her teaching style (Chikwado 2018).

As previously indicated (under the comprehensive nature), parameters for assessing the child's attitude will include an assessment of his or her dispositions toward his or her peers, as well as things related to his or her reaction to other people's feelings, thoughts, and the school in general. This has a direct impact on his affective domain and is easily tested using teacher-created examinations, interviews, observations, and surveys.

Intelligent quotient (I.Q) exams, teacher-made tests, and non-test metrics that assess the child's inherent intellect and capacity to reason in abstract terms can all be used to measure cognitive domain parameters.

Similarly, aptitude-testing criteria can be built around a child's numerical ability, musical/artistic preferences, secretarial skills, fluency, and mechanical creations, among other things, all of which highlight both psychomotor and affective domains. The evaluation of a child's personality is more thorough since it considers his or her reaction to people and things, temperament, interpersonal interactions, mannerisms, disposition, emotions, morals features, and everything else that defines him as a person. All three dimensions of psychomotor, emotional, and cognitive functioning are assessed in this type of examination. Simple sociometric exams, personality-traits tests, interviews, and biographies can all be utilized to get the information needed.

Advantages of continuous assessment

The use of continuous evaluation has enabled students/pupils to experiment with effective study habits. They are so immersed in constant, uninterrupted study regimens. This has resulted in verified results among students of all levels.

The feedback pupils have received on their current efforts has provided them the motivation to work more and improve their existing ranking. They challenged them to work harder and better grasp their tasks. Data on the system's performance abounds for possible system review. Students/pupils derive data for better performance in the same way that teachers collect data on their classroom performance for personal improvement. The increased availability of data has a positive impact on the system, teachers, and students. Formative assessments are conducted on occasion (from

term to term, year to year). A focused teacher will be able to evaluate students' progress and, on occasion, shine the search light on himself. Summative assessments typically include decision making and, as such, can assist the instructor in reaching an informed conclusion regarding the student. Diagnostic assessments can be performed to assist in identifying the learning issues that pupils/students face. Once the core cause of learning problems is understood, solutions may no longer be fanciful. What is currently deemed noble is the inclusion of teachers' evaluation records in the final evaluation of the candidate/student.

Draw-back of continuous assessment

The ongoing assessment method was created by humans. As with everything created by man, there are flaws. The following are the downsides of the innovation under consideration. The majority of teachers in our classrooms now were born before computers (BBCS). This suggests that they are not computer literate. Efficient and successful process execution necessitates computer literacy, especially in a century where Nigerian teachers aspire to be like their colleagues worldwide. Sending instructors on training/refresher courses is now considered a luxury that most state governments and private businesses cannot afford. And, because most organizations would rather play it safe with the badly prepared instructors they already have on staff than replace them with well trained and skillfully trained teachers, they will continue to experiment with employees who can barely make learning happen. It is not an exaggeration to argue that some of these teachers may make students unlearn what they may have accidentally learned elsewhere. Some children who have desk-top computers at home and lap-top computers at school outperform their professors who cannot butt a lap-top.

Nigeria's education industry employs the most people (from kindergarten to primary, from secondary to tertiary). The population is completely out of control. The timetable is clogged with so much activity, and extra lessons have taken on a prodigious role in the school calendar. Teachers do not have the time to deliver the ongoing assessments as planned. Many of them have resorted to giving one continuous assessment and repeating the scores for the number of times the continuous assessment is expected to be given in a semester or term. This is a systemic abuse. It is occurring, and supervisors and area education offices of state ministries of education are complicit. Teachers, like their teaching talents, expire. Nothing is constant in the teaching profession. Everything evolves throughout time. Those who do not participate in workshops and training events quickly lose touch with what is going on in the world of education. Fortunately for them, neither of them disqualifies the other from taking the class. Even those

who are unqualified are elevated.

Haven satisfied the minimum number of years on a particular rank; (subject to existence of vacancy, in some cases). These categories of teachers thrive on the innocence of the students who lack the audacity to tell them that they may be wrong in certain respects. The fitness of a teacher is a function of his/her pedagogical soundness. The moment he/she stops updating in line with current trends in his/her area of specialization, such a teacher loses his/her worth. He/she expires. When salt loses its' taste, it is fit for nothing. Thus to remain relevant in the classroom, a focused teacher should from time to time yield to training and retraining in order to be up to date. The cheapest excuse for lazy teachers is to say that the job lacks motivation. Even at that, the administration of President Muhammad Buhari has made efforts to improve the lot of teachers at the primary and secondary school level. However, at the level of the universities, so much grounds are left uncovered. The protracted problems between government and members of the Academic Union of Universities are all tailored towards making the work more appealing to parent/learners. This is one way through which soft-landing can be given to lecturers who work in environments that are infested by cultists, kidnappers, rapists, arsonists and weapon handlers. You don't really know what all these portend until any of these men visit your house or your children's school. The disadvantages are legion.

Looking ahead

We live in a time when everything has changed. People who became teachers as a result of unemployment make up a sizable proportion of the teaching workforce today. They would not be teaching if they had their way. People who educate as a pastime make up the remaining minor percentages. They enjoy instructing. While others moan and nag, they find satisfaction at work. They are doing what they enjoy the most. This should be the attitude. Teachers must appreciate their jobs while thanking God for His mercies. You may not harvest if you contemplate the sun, and you may not plant if you consider the rain. God is at the heart of it all. This is not to mean (as is sometimes stated) that their rewards are limited to heaven. They should be grateful to be in such a noble profession here on Earth. The number of teachers without professional training who are interested in teaching is shockingly large. Despite whatever the Teachers Registration Council does, their population continues to expand. This has become a stumbling block in the teaching profession. Untrained instructors hurt the system in the same way that quack doctors harm the medical profession. Untrained instructors abound in substantial numbers at all levels, from primary to secondary/technical to university. When an untrained teacher teaches pupils that No. 17 is an animal, it

will take years for that child to realize that what the instructor meant was LION. This is not good. I propose reintroducing teachers' colleges for the benefit of the system, practice, and learners because secondary schools and technical institutions do not prepare instructors.

What is happening at the level of colleges of education cannot change the situation we are in today. When it comes to admission, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) usually gives universities priority. Universities are offered a few solid applicants with distinctions and five credit passes including English and Mathematics. Polytechnics and colleges of Education are reserved for those with less solid grades but no distinctions and five credit passes including English and Mathematics. Only those whose routes are uncertain would cross from secondary to teaching lines at the level of educational colleges (COEs). If the amputation of instructors' Grade II certificates had not occurred, solid pupils from that background would have continued on to Education colleges. Those who graduate from universities with a B.sc (Ed) or B.A (Ed) will eventually become solid teachers who will favorably impact the system.

Finally, the unrest in the ASUU camp is undermining what is left of education in Nigeria due to the lack of foresight on the part of those who speak for the government. It is no longer news that the government favors petroleum subsidies over youth education. This is a depressing observation. The restoration of peace in this turbulent sector will put an end to the brain drain that is currently robbing Nigeria of a very vibrant portion of its population.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of continuous assessment as a tool for evaluation cannot be fully realized unless the human aspect is appropriately considered. Humans are responsible for making a process work. If people are dissatisfied, the process will be hampered. As a result, when discussing how to better the lot of the student, the teacher aspect, which is always the common denominator of teaching (as a profession), must be taken into account. In a period when the naira's value has plummeted, even take-home money has left many stranded. According to the government's body language, there will be no increase in teachers' pay in the coming decade. A highly difficult method such as continuous assessment can be easily misused in the face of poor motivation. Furthermore, the instructor must understand that acceptance to teach goes beyond monetary compensation. Every attempt to cut corners (such as awarding marks without scripts, providing one continuous evaluation and reproducing the scores three times, etc.) should be avoided. The future of the children under our

care is too critical to risk. It demonstrates the principals' (head teachers') administrative skill to carefully monitor teachers for compliance. Every now and again, the government should allow teachers' salary and allowances to be paid before those of other workers. This would go a long way toward assuring them that they are important. Paying them after considering all other ministries is not a morale-boosting technique. No one is clamoring for wage hikes (which have become a luxury), but rather to pay them early in the month.

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