CURRICULUM INNOVATION WITH RESPECT TO CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Joyce David Eduok
Department of Mathematics,
College of Education,
Afaha Nsit.

Abstract

The dynamic nature of the curriculum process informed the thesis of this paper, which is innovations and continuous assessment in Nigerian primary and secondary schools. Analysis of the Nigerian education sector reveals the challenges of incoherence in policy formulation and implementation. Therefore the need for transformation in curriculum for all the educational level becomes necessary. Continuous Assessment is aimed at finding out how much a learner has acquired in terms of learning skills but also takes into consideration the personal-social development of the child. In Nigerian schools, assessment, most often than not is concentrated on cognitive achievement to the detriment of affective and psychomotor development of learners. This paper therefore, examined curriculum innovation and continuous assessments in Nigerian primary and secondary schools. Concepts of innovation and continuous assessment were discussed. The objectives of primary and secondary education as, stipulated in National Policy on Education (2004) were highlighted. Challenges of implementing continuous assessment were discussed. Recommendations were made and conclusions were drawn.

Curriculum issues, either in an explicit or an implicit manner, are linked to current thinking and actions on educational concerns around the world. Innovation from cradle, has always remained an important feature of daily life as human beings strive to find solutions to the array of problems confronting them. In Nigeria, Educational Administrators are now more conscious than ever before of their role in the nationwide scheme of curriculum innovation. Not only have new courses been introduced and new contents injected into existing subjects, a fundamental change in the system of assessment of students’ performance has also emerged. The ultimate goal of innovations is to make progress (Iyela, 2001). According to Offorma (2002) innovation in the curriculum helps to update the curriculum to enable it meet the demands of the changing society as well as societal needs and aspirations.
The Nigerian educational system at both primary and secondary level has not been left out as it continues to witness a catalogue of innovations, including the area of continuous assessment. Educators believe that a static curriculum is a dying curriculum. This paper will therefore analyse the major curriculum innovation with respect to continuous assessment in Nigerian primary and secondary schools.

The Problem
Before now, the assessment of students in both primary and secondary school was based on passing a prescribed examination (Ononyumdo, 2012). In Nigerian schools, assessment, most often than not is concentrated on cognitive achievement to the detriment of affective and psychomotor development of learners (Ipaye, 1986; Iyewarun, 1986 and Okon, 1986). This is not unconnected with the Nigerian society’s quest for paper qualification. Thus, a child with pass marks in his/her subject receives a certificate at the end of the course no matter how “bad” his/her manners are or how unskilled he/she may be. In other words, behaviour, attitude, interest, aptitude and other affective and psychomotor traits do not count towards obtaining a certificate, (Idowu & Esere, 2009). Educational evaluators (Iyewarun, 1986; Okon, 1986, and Obe, 1986, Miller, Frank, Franks & Getto, 1989;) have prescribed a departure from this trend to a more comprehensive picture of the development of learners in school system. Herein lays the rationale for this study.

Concept of Innovation and Continuous Assessment
Education system in Nigeria is currently undergoing a number of innovations. One of the innovations being advocated is carrying out assessment during the course of instruction. This is called School Base assessment (SBA) which is part of continuous assessment. School Base Assessment (SBA) is a teacher-directed assessment procedure which originated from the classroom. According to Griffith (2005) School Based Assessment refers to the process where students as candidates, undertake specified assignments during the course of the school year under the guidance of the teacher. The introduction of the National policy on Education adopted in 1977, revised it in 1981, 1989, 1998 and 2004, special emphasis have been placed in the use of comprehensive and continuous assessment in schools. Besides, objective multiple choice questions have also been given special attention at both primary and secondary levels. Similarly, new attention is been given to practical experiences and test during which learners are observed and assessed. 30% is given to continuous assessment as scores while 70% is for examination. Assessment is a mean whereby the teachers obtain information about knowledge gains, behavourial changes and other aspects of the development of learners (Oguneye, 2002). It covers all aspects of school experience both within and outside the classroom. It covers the cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspect of school learning which originated from the work of Bloom et al (1971).
Bloom and his associate categorized the cognitive domain into six levels of thinking. These are knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The affective domain covers such characteristics like values, attitude, interest, adjustment, habit, perception, social relation and beliefs. Psychomotor domain involves skills acquired by learners in manipulation, following specified procedure and body movements.

The fundamental role of assessment is for improving students learning, instructional practice and educational options. Also, the introduction of continuous assessment ideally is to enhance better performance of students by creating more avenues for them to earn better grades so that students’ performance in each school subject is not detrimental at one sitting.

The continuous assessment of learners’ progress is seen as a mechanism whereby the final grading of learners in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning systematically takes account of all their performances during a given period of schooling (Falayalo, 1986). From this definition, one could infer that continuous assessment is an assessment approach which involves the use of a variety of assessment instruments assessing various components of learning, not only the thinking processes but behaviours, personality traits and manual dexterity. In Nigerian schools, however, assessment especially at the primary and secondary level, most often is concentrated on cognitive achievement to the detriment of affective and psychomotor development of learners (Ipaye, 1986; Iyewarun, 1986 and Okon, 1986).

Objectives of Primary and Secondary Education

Primary Education

The Federal Government of Nigeria saw the need for primary education and included it in the National Policy on Education (2004:14), they include to:

a. inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively;
b. lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
c. give citizenship education as a basic for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
d. mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
e. develop in the child ability to adapt to the child’s changing environment;
f. give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child’s capacity;
g. provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality (p.14).
Secondary Education

The broad goals of secondary education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2004:18), are to prepare the individual for:

i. useful living within the society; and
ii. higher education (p.18).

In 1999, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme of 9-3-4 system was launched as a replacement for Nigeria’s Universal Primary Education Scheme of the 6-3-3-4 system of primary education by the Nigerian Government in Sokoto, a programme which grew out of the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtiem, Thailand, for the purpose of forging a global consensus and commitment to provide basic education for all (Dike, 2000 in Unagha, 2008). The programme embodied a free, compulsory and uninterrupted 9-year school programme and was comprised of primary and junior secondary education. Consequently, the Common Entrance Examination to Junior Secondary School (JSS) was abolished in 2006 while the primary school leaving certificate examination was also abolished such that there is now 100% transition from primary to junior secondary school. In its place there now exists the Universal Basic Certificate Examination (UBCE) at the end of the UBE programme in Junior Secondary School (Ogbuagu, 2006) while the National Policy on Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004) had earlier recommended that the educational assessment of the Nigerian child should be liberalized by basing them in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of individual. Therefore making a proportion, of the pupils’ scores leading to the award of the UBCE as a continuous assessment scores across the primary and junior secondary schools.

Challenges of Implementing Continuous Assessment

The most disturbing bane of our educational system is the ineffectiveness of our curriculum implementation. The attainment of our goals and objective is marred by a myriad of problems. With the advent of the new National Policy on Education, a major restructuring was noticeable with regards to continuous assessment. Presently, most of our teachers are untrained and unqualified for the implementation of continuous assessment. The problems span from the first stage of curriculum development through curriculum dissemination and diffusion. For the sake of expediency, the challenges of implementing continuous assessment shall be categorized as follows:

Policy Implementation

A major challenge of implementing continuous assessment in Nigeria is lack of proper adherence to policy statement. The implementation committee of the National Policy on Education recommended that, school should establish a process whereby the progress of students will be monitored continuously (Ministry of Education, 1979).
This recommendation was accepted by the Ministry of Education at the Federal and State levels. According to Ononyumolo (2012), the reintroduction of the Universal Basic Education and the expansion of its scope from six to nine year basic education in 1999 brought a new dimension to continuous assessment in the form of School Based Assessment (SBA) at the lower, middle and upper basic levels. The policy was made in the light of the fact that continuous assessment will form a substantial percentage of the final certificate examination. It implementation has not toed that line.

Wrong Method of Assessment

Most of our schools still operate the traditional assessment practices of the last century. This involves assessing learners with the sole aim of preparing them for examination, most often than not is concentrated on cognitive achievement to the detriment of affective and psychomotor development of learners (Ipaye, 1986; Iyewarun, 1986; Okon, 1986). Continuous assessment is expected to cover all aspects of school experience both within and outside the classroom. It covers the cognitive as well as the affective and psychomotor aspects of learning. This classificatory system covering all aspects of school learning originated from the work of Bloom et al (1971).

Lack of Materials and Facilities

Both primary and secondary schools in Nigeria lack materials and facilities necessary for acquisition of skills in the psychomotor domain and poor supervision or administration of continuous assessment practice in various schools (Egbule, 1998). Continuous assessment uses a variety of instruments in the process of assessing the student because it considers all the three domains of learning namely: cognitive, affective and psychomotor.

Professional Problem

In Nigerian schools, teachers remain the sole arbitrators of curriculum projects. Consequently, without well qualified and professional teachers all efforts behind the implementation of continuous assessment would be fruitless. Teachers need to be trained on the implementation of curriculum innovation with respect to continuous assessment on the cognitive domain as well as the affective and psychomotor domains. Continuous assessment places much power in the hands of teachers. This power is often abused by the teachers who award scores even and when tests are not administered (Ughamadu, 1994). This is why the teachers should be trained.

Class Size

The problem of extra large class with overcrowded pupils (Uyoata, 2003), has been pertinent and persisting in our school system. In the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) the recommended teacher-pupil ratio is 1:35. The Universal Primary Education launched in 1976 brought about increase in school enrolment without
adequate teacher to match the school population. This increase has led to overcrowded classrooms which are experienced today. This type of ratio does not permit effective implementation of continuous assessment in the school system.

Conclusion

Based on the problems highlighted in relation to curriculum innovation with respect to continuous assessment. It is obvious that continuous assessment if properly implemented will be more meaningful and more representative of the learners overall abilities. It will do the nation’s education system a lot of good if the assessment of students’ progress at the primary and secondary levels is done based on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain for all round assessment of the their strengths and weaknesses.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made for effective implementation of continuous assessment.

1. The government of Nigeria should mandate and support teachers to go for in-service training and refresher courses to update their knowledge in assessment.
2. Educational policies as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004) should be strictly implemented and adhered to; otherwise achievable educational policies should be developed.
3. People without teaching qualification should not be employed to teach in Nigerian schools.

References


