TREND AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN SECONDARY SCHOOL MATHEMATICS: IMPLICATION FOR EDUCATION FOR ALL

Odogo Nkechinyelu Iruoma
Department of Mathematics/Statistics,
Federal Polytechnic,
Oko.

Abstract
Through continuous Assessment exercise in school the total skills of what a student should acquire is being evaluated. Unfortunately the continuous assessment is being faced with various challenges. Thus, this paper views the kind of support to be provided to teachers to strengthen and to sustain effective implementation; provision of Training to effectively implement continuous assessment; implementation problems of continuous assessment. The paper highlights the implication on education for all. Recommendations were made for effective implementation of continuous assessment so that the goal of education for all will be achieved. When these problems facing the effective implementation of continuous assessment are nip at the bud, definitely the nation Nigeria is going to have a face lift in Education.

One major in-thing in the assessment of Educational outcomes in Nigeria educational system is the introduction of continuous assessment as an important aspect of evaluation. The need for continuous assessment is particularly expressed in the 1981 version of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981).

Theoretically the learning outcome shows the human characteristics at the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains as proposed by Bloom (1956). These domains are related to the learner’s development in the way he/she thinks, feels and acts. To stress the importance of asserting achievement in these three educational domains, continuous assessment programme was introduced and made compulsory in Nigerian educational system. Thus the emphasis is on the provision of the comprehensive picture of the learner in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, which in practice is not done as expected.

A handbook on continuous assessment released by the Federal Ministry of Education (1985) defined continuous assessment as “A mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in
cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behavior takes account in a systematic way, of all his performance during a given period of schooling, such assessment involves the use of a great variety of models of evaluation for the purpose of guiding and improving learning and performance of the student.

Nworgu (2003) defined continuous assessment as a process which deliberately allows for a periodic assessment throughout the course and takes into account progress towards the goal as well as success in reaching it. “The building up of a cumulative judgment about the performance of each individual” .... “A continual updating of teachers” judgments about their pupils.

What exactly is this assessment? Assessment is the process of gathering information for decision making. Assessment is carried out at any stage or end of activities to determine the extent of performance. In a system it involves collection of information about a child’s level of development with reference to his/her learning outcome. Hence Onasanya (2007) defined assessment as the process of investigating the status of an individual or group with reference to expected outcome. Federal Ministry of Education (1985) posits that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. This assessment therefore should be continuously done but Unachukwu and Onunkwo (2004) revealed that teachers do not adequately do these as expected.

This paper aims at highlighting the trend and challenges associated with the implementation of this continuous assessment as it is expected in the teaching and learning of mathematics.

Kind of Support to be Provided to Teachers to Strengthen and Sustain Effective Implementation

In Nigeria, the purpose of advocating for continuous assessment may be inferred from the policy statement, but other important reasons may include the need to:

1. Make assessment an integral part of the teaching-learning process.
2. Adopt an assessment procedure, which takes into account the learner’s performance through the entire period of schooling.
3. Encourage the teachers to be flexible and innovative in their teaching.
4. Adopt an assessment procedure that will facilitate the appropriate guidance of the learner and at the same time enable the teacher assess his own instructional material (Abonyi, Okeke and Omebe: 2005). From the fore-going, the teacher of mathematics in a secondary school is encompassed with a lot of work to be done in order to achieve the expectation upon him/her. For the teacher to perform effectively on
implementation of continuous assessment, he/she should be supported morally, financially and otherwise.

Enabling environment should be provided for the teacher to be able to assess consistently in all areas of the domain. The classroom environment is a matter, a mathematics teacher needed to get the cognitive assessment through class work, class assignment, homework, project etc. As he teaches a class of over 45 students it is enough trouble to go through all that they are doing on the spot in the class as the lesson proceeds. Harbor-Peters (1999) in a survey on the frequency of the use of various modes of assessment of mathematics achievement, found that mathematics teachers want class work to be given at the end of each teaching period. These modes of assessment are very important so that the learner will actually get what he ought to get, but unfortunately the number under a particular teacher is far above what he can control and work upon.

The teacher therefore needed to carry a smaller number of students at a time. Also the teacher can be helped by adding one or two more mathematics teachers to the existing one in a particular class. Workload should be reduced for the mathematics teachers and that will help to sustain an effective implementation of continuous assessment.

According to Harbour-Peter (1999), homework as one of the modes of continuous assessment provide a better practice material, which of course the teacher may not afford it in order to show it to the students. It is what these students see that they can go home to dwell on. Where are these practice materials, upon which an effective implementation of continuous assessment can be carried out?

The systematic nature of continuous assessment calls for concerted planning which predetermines every action in the assessment process. By this, the teacher needed much help so as to sustain effective implementation. Also considering the comprehensiveness of continuous assessment where the student is assessed in three domains using variety of assessment instruments and several types of tests are used in assessing the progress of the learner, the teacher needed support to strengthen and sustain the effective implementation of this type of assessment (Abonyi, Okereke, Omebe; 2005).

**Provision of Training to Effectively Implement Continuous Assessment**

The aim of the Federal Government of Nigeria in introducing continuous assessment can be deduced from the National Policy on Education (F.R.N, 2004) and also from the Handbook on continuous assessment (1985). The National policy recognizes that Government is aware that the administration of continuous assessment
within schools will pose certain significant problems to teachers in particular and educational system in general. The policy further advocated training programmes for the teachers who will be central to the achievement of continuous assessment and other objectives of school evaluation programme.

According to Nworgu (2003) for ensuring uniformity and quality of assessment there is much effort being made currently in the direction of producing standardized instruments for assessment of different dimension’s of learning, he further declared that this is a step in the right direction. Teacher will therefore be encouraged to acquire the necessary competence and right attitude towards the use of standardized assessment instruments.

Nworgu (2003) also opined that there should be common standard for reporting pupils’ performance so that performances could be comparable across schools and across wide geographical areas. Hence in continuous assessment, performance should not be reported in raw scores but in scaled measures. Teachers should therefore be trained in computing and interpreting these measures.

Asuru (2007) who posited that classroom teachers must be professionally and attitudinally prepared to face the challenges of non-cognitive assessment and that the scores generated from non-cognitive assessment should be used to monitor the students’ academic and personality development. In support of this Dimson & Uzomah (2010) in their study indicated that teacher educators are of the opinion that experts should be used in developing the affective instruments, students with affective quality should be rewarded and teachers need to be properly trained in the construction and use of affective behavior instruments. Therefore for effective implementation of continuous assessment it is important that teachers should be trained and re-trained in the area of the construction and instrument of non-cognitive domain.

Implementation Problems of Continuous Assessment

The implementation of the policy on continuous assessment is faced with some problems. Nworgu (2003) identified some problems which include:

Comparability of standards. This could arise from differences in the quality of tests and other assessment instruments used in different schools. Apart from qualitative difference, the way and manner tests or assessment instruments are developed and administered in various school could present problems in scoring and grading in achievement in the various school subjects.

Record keeping and continuity of Records. This is another major problem, in that continuous assessment cannot be meaningful except there is a
meticulous keeping of accurate records for each student throughout his/her period of schooling. Since these records are expected to be cumulative from class to class and from school to school, there is need for some uniformity in the kinds of records kept and format for keeping such records. This generates problem when a child happens to transfer from one school to another.

**Storage facilities:** Also, associated with the problem of record keeping is the storage facility for safe keeping of these records. As a matter of fact, most schools both primary and secondary are poorly equipped for such a function.

**Unqualified personnel:** There is the problem of unqualified personnel to implement and operate continuous assessment. Many mathematics teachers do not possess the necessary competence or skills in developing valid assessment instrument that will assess behavioural outcomes in the three domains.

**Large number of student:** To operate continuous assessment effectively, the mathematics teacher needs to spend time on each child helping and observing, especially in this age of high rate of low performance in mathematics. This implies that the teachers have to teach less number of students per class; hence the teacher will be able to teach and assess and provide feedback to the children individually.

**Misinterpretation of guideline:** This is another problem encountered by teachers. Some principals and teachers think that assessments are limited to paper and pencil tests and examination. Teachers can summarize students’ scores as class work and assignments’ to make up a grade for a given period. Teachers are confused on the amount of material content to be covered by each test. There are different interpretations given on what happens when an assignment or test is given and some of the students fail to turn it in for grading. Giving a grade of zero when a student did not turn in an assignment does not reflect the actual ability of the student. What to be done becomes a problem.

**Implication on Education for All**

Education is one of the indispensable tools for national development. Every one has right to education. Nigeria as a nation has never been left out in the global effort to offer education to one and all. She has taken various steps both at the regional and national levels, at various times to give her citizens an opportunity to be educated.

The operation of continuous assessment is one of such effort that is to make sure that every one going through the school gets all that will qualify him/her to be educated.
According to Okeke (2002), the slogan “Education for all” (EFA) started as an organized response to the widespread concern in 1980’s over the deterioration of education world wide and simply put, it is “a declaration that assesses the quality of education that must be provided for all humans”.

The implementation of continuous assessment is one of those accesses to quality education. When an individual’s development is assessed wholesomely and information about him provided on his ability, aptitude, interests, attitudes and manipulation skills. Such assessment shows whether there are positive changes in the learner’s cognitive, affective and psychomotor behavior. It is a positive change that depicts that one is educated.

The problems facing the implementation of this policy therefore are a threat to this slogan education for all. No one can boldly stand to claim being educated if there are no positive changes in these three domains. The continuous assessment according to Abonyi, Okereke, Omebe (2005) is used to take decisions concerning the learner’s appropriate next higher education and vocation in world of work.

According to Kosemani (2000), education should be oriented towards capacity creation and not system maintenance. That means that institutions of learning must provide the instructional facilities needed to help teachers carry out the continuous assessment exercise effectively to create a literate society.

**Conclusion**

It is not only that the Federal Government of Nigeria has been sensitized to the short-comings of this once and all type of evaluation of student’s performance, but has also taken steps to rectify the anomaly through the introduction of continuous Assessment in the school system. So if the challenges associated with its implementation are addressed well then off-course the expectation of having a holistic educated person will work out.

Hence a great deal needed to be done in the present school mathematics system so as to achieve the slogan “education for all”.

**Recommendations**

For effective implementation of continuous assessment that will help in achieving the goal of education for all, the following recommendations are made.

Teacher training institutions should include training in the assessment of the three domains in their programmes for the pre-service as well as the in-service teacher.

Also workshop and seminars should be organized on a regular basis to up-date the knowledge and skills of the serving teachers on the various evaluation techniques.
Government should make effort to provide the schools with storage facilities.

To overcome the problem of differences in the quality of assessment, let the education board develop a common test item pool/bank which should be moderated by a panel for use in each education Zone. Such a panel becomes the continuous assessment committee for each education zone.

At present the number of students per class is enormous. This makes it difficult for teachers to teach and evaluate effectively, even if they have the competence. The government may consider hiring teacher aids to assist in recording grades.

References


Education Association of Nigeria (PEAN) at FCE (T) Omoku.


Journal of Teacher Perspective, Volume 8 No. 1 July, 2014, ISSN: 2006 - 0173