
Teachers' Perception of Continuous Assessment: A Mechanism for Quality Assurance in Enugu State Primary Schools, Nigeria

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It is generally acknowledged that education in both developed and developing countries of the world including Nigeria, is an essential instrument for achieving national development. Consequently, the Nigerian government, communities, organizations and individuals continue to establish educational institutions with the aim of training citizens in order to develop them as well as the entire country. This effort cuts across different social classes that see education as a means to an end. Nigeria, with her enviable large size of human resources, being a partner in this process, is expected to be number one in the rank. Unfortunately, she lags behind as most of the problems bothering the human population in society are blamed on her educational system.

Teaching and learning form the core of all activities in every educational institution. These enhance the achievement of the desired skills and knowledge to be acquired by individuals who are exposed to them, since the teachers are supposed to be knowledgeable of the responsibilities left under their care. In addition, both the classroom and home environments are equally expected to be adequately equipped with the right materials, all of which are conducive for positive teaching and learning. Regrettably, the teaching and learning activities one finds in many Nigerian schools are lacking in quality.

The Intuition

Quality simply means something that is ideally good or (and) has a high standard. Olojede (nd) defines quality as the level of value in a product or a level of achievement, a standard against which to judge others. An education of high quality therefore according to Fasasi (2006), should have high quality students, teachers, facilities, school curriculum and government policies as inputs. Quality in education is teaching and learning processes that are good, of high standard or ideal. To enforce quality in any system, quality assurance mechanism must be brought into focus. Fasasi (2006:16) further asserts that quality assurance is “consistent provision and utilization of good and high standard resources to foster effective teaching and learning, in every stage and aspect of the educational system”; this will only make sense when application of its strategy is not deferred till the end of an educational system. As Enem (2005) observes, quality assurance is a system that works to ensure that every aspect of the organization and every employee are focused at all times in meeting and exceeding customer’s requirements. Uvah (2005) sees it as both fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose. In fact, quality assurance in education is an effective means of ensuring quality of inputs, teaching-learning process, academic achievement of students and conducive school environment. If the present trend in students’ school achievement will be used as a measure of quality, it may seem that the quality of education in Nigeria is low, since output is poor.

Nigeria at the moment requires quality assurance in all aspect of her educational activities in order to harness, develop and utilize the great potentials of her human resources. The achievement of this will, no doubt, set the country in the right direction towards achieving national development. The present national educational objectives are in the right direction as all stakeholders are expected to work as a team and agree on the necessary actions to take as a follow-up. It is therefore required that all necessary steps should be taken with regard to teachers’ qualifications, techniques and social relationships, among other inputs, to ensure that the goals are met. These call for regular output measures, in order to account for the level of success achieved. Continuous assessment therefore stands strategic in teaching and learning in order not to deviate from the national objectives of education, especially in the present status of Nigeria as a developing nation.

Continuous assessment in education relates to regular evaluation of both inputs and outputs in teaching and learning activities in order to assess the extent to which the objectives of such activities are achieved. As defined by the Federal Ministry of Education, continuous assessment is a mechanism where the final grading of a student, in cognitive and psychomotor domains of behaviour, takes account of all his performance during a given period of schooling. Unachukwu and Onunkwo (2004) see it as a technique of determining the learner’s achievement in such areas as cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, taking into account all their scores in tests,

assignments, projects, interviews and sociogram during a school term, session or programme.

In education, one is allowed a period to learn after which a test or an examination is administered to evaluate what one has learnt. In this case, questions are asked on the extent to which learners have achieved the knowledge intended. Akindolu, Banjoko and Jimoh (2010) assert that the outcome of the school curriculum depends mainly on the effectiveness of the assessment and evaluation (examination) system put in place by stakeholders in public schools. It is in the same trend of thought that the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced continuous assessment in all primary schools, instead of using just one end of programme evaluation. Consequently, it is expected that the quality of products of education will be improved, since the flaws in the previous one shot examination at the end of the programme evaluation is addressed.

However, it is observed that these expectations are not met as continuous assessment is not used as expected in some schools, either in ignorance or out of willful omission or fraud. This observation is supported by Obioma, in Akindoju et al. (2010) when he observed that continuous assessment by teachers is susceptible to irregularities, resulting from award of marks on tests not conducted, non-use of tables of specification for test items, setting easy questions items that can easily be marked and giving students tests to mark and record. The role of the teacher in achieving the objectives of the Federal Government as regards continuous assessment cannot be over emphasised. Hence, the main objective of this study is to determine teachers' perception of continuous assessment as a mechanism for quality assurance in junior and senior primary schools in Enugu State.

Generally, focussing on continuous assessment, the objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To find out the differences in the level of understanding of continuous assessment by primary school teachers in Enugu State;
2. To determine the difference between the opinion of teachers in junior and senior primary schools in Enugu State;
3. To determine the differences in teachers' perception of continuous assessment with regard to their years of experience;
4. To determine the difference between male and female primary school teachers' perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State;
5. To identify the difference in the opinion of teachers in urban and rural primary schools in Enugu State.

Research Questions

Based on the stated objectives, the following research questions guided the study:

1. Is there any difference in the perception of continuous assessment among primary school teachers in Enugu State?
2. Is there a difference between the opinion of teachers in junior and senior primary schools in Enugu State?
3. Is there a difference in primary school teachers' perception of continuous assessment according to their years of experience in Enugu State?
4. What is the difference between male and female primary school teachers' perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State?
5. What is the difference in the opinion of teachers in urban and rural primary schools in Enugu State?

Hypotheses (H₀)

The following corresponding stated hypotheses emanate from the research questions:

1. There is no significant difference in the responses of primary school teachers on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.
2. There is no significant difference in the responses of junior and senior primary school teachers on their opinion of continuous assessment in Enugu State.
3. There is no significant difference in the responses of primary school teachers, according to their years of experience, on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.
4. There is no significant difference in the responses of male and female primary school teachers on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.
5. There is no significant difference in the responses of urban and rural primary school teachers on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design in the effort to gather and analyze information related to the problem of study. Specifically, the main objective was to elicit current opinion of primary school teachers, who constituted the research subjects, in using continuous assessment as one of the ways for achieving quality assurance at the primary school level in Enugu State. The State is presently divided into

six educational zones, namely, Agbani, Awgu, Enugu, Nsukka, Obollo-Afor and Udi. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select three educational zones out of the existing six. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two LGAs (one rural and one urban) in each of the three educational zones. Using systematic random sampling technique, two rural and two urban primary schools were chosen from each of the six LGAs. In all, six (6) rural and six (6) urban schools primary schools from six LGAs (3 rural and 3 urban) were selected for the study. The six LGAs were Enugu East and Isi Uzo (in Enugu Educational Zone), Nsukka and Uzo Uwani (in Nsukka Educational Zone) as well as Igbo-Eze South and Udenu (in Obollo Afor Educational Zone).

Population and Sample

The population of study consisted of 13,261 junior and senior public primary school teachers in Enugu State (Enugu State Ministry of Education, 2011). However, all the junior and senior public primary school teachers in the selected schools constituted the research subjects. In other words, the research sample size was 4,604 (over $\frac{1}{3}$ of the population size). Table 1 represents distribution of the research population according to Educational Zone / LGA and the corresponding number of teachers. On the other hand, Table II represents the distribution of the research subjects according to the selected Educational Zones and LGAs. It is important to note that not all the research subjects were available during the administration of the research instrument for the study. Hence, a total of 4,260 respondents were used.

Table 1: Distribution of the Research Subjects by Educational Zones & LGAs

ZONE	LGA	NO. OF TEACHERS
Agbani	Enugu South	817
	Nkanu East	1,318
	Nkanu West	540
Awgu	Awgu	574
	Oji River	588
	Aninri	730
Enugu	Enugu North	927
	Enugu East	871
	Isi Uzo	438
Nsukka	Nsukka	1,223
	Igbo Etiti	625
	Uzouwani	661
Obollo Afor	Igbo Eze South	601
	Igbo Eze North	1,034

	Udenu	810
Udi	Udi	889
	Eziagu	615
Total	17	13,261

Source: 2010 Annual School Census, Ministry of Education, Enugu

Table II: Distribution of Primary School Teachers in Enugu State by Educational Zones & LGAs

ZONE	LGA	NO. OF TEACHERS
Enugu	Enugu East	871
	Isi Uzo	438
Nsukka	Nsukka	1223
	Uzo-Uwani	661
Obollo Afor	Igbo-Eze South	601
	Udenu	810
Total	6	4,604

Source: 2010, Curled from Annual School Census, Ministry of Education, Enugu.

Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a twelve-item structured questionnaire which was developed by the researchers and tested for validity and reliability, bearing in mind the objectives of the study as well as the research questions and hypotheses arising from the objectives. The instrument comprised two sections. The respondents were expected to tick the appropriate box against the items in section one and rate each of the items in section two on a four-point Likert-type scale rated ‘strongly agree’ (4), ‘agree’ (3), ‘disagree’ (2), and ‘strongly disagree’ (1).The responses of the respondents served as data to be analyzed for the study.

Method of Analysis

Frequency and mean scores of the responses were analyzed to provide answers to the research questions. The benchmark of 2.5, arising from the weighted mean response was used to determine the acceptance or rejection of each research question. In other words, for decision-making, any mean which was equal to or greater than 2.5 implied an agreement with the stated item. On the other hand, any mean which was less than 2.5 implied a disagreement with the stated item.

Chi-Square (X^2) test for independence was applied to test the different categories of responses on the identified variables in Null Hypothesis 1.

Chi-Square (X^2) formula:
$$\frac{\sum(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where

∑ = Sum

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

On the other hand, Z-test was applied to Null Hypotheses 2, 4 and 5 respectively to analyze the responses arising from different groups identified.

Z-test formula (Nworgu, 2006:157):

$$Z = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{SD_{\tilde{x}}}$$

Where

\bar{X}_1 and \bar{X}_2 represent independent means

$SD_{\tilde{x}}$ = Standard error

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to test Hypothesis 3 where the groups of responses were more than two. In other words, the application of ANOVA was to determine whether there was any significant difference between the different mean responses of the groups. Discussion of findings was based on the results of both the research questions and the hypotheses posed for the study. Based on the discussion of findings, recommendations were made for the way forward.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question 1

Is there any difference in the level of understanding of continuous assessment among primary school teachers in Enugu State?

Each of the eight related questions from the main instrument for data collection on the level of understanding of continuous assessment among primary school teachers in Enugu State was correctly responded to by 4,260 research subjects. Table III is a summary of their weighted responses.

Table III: Mean Level of Primary School Teachers' Understanding of Continuous Assessment in Enugu State

No of items	SA	A	D	SD	Total Response	Mean
8	15,080	15,820	1,790	1,390	34,080	3.35

Analysis of data presented in Table III shows that the grand mean response on the level of primary school teachers' understanding of continuous assessment in Enugu State is 3.35. This mean is above the 2.5 mean score set for acceptance of minor or no

difference. In other words, the result shows that there is a difference in the level of primary school teachers' understanding of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Research Question 2:

Is there a difference between the opinion of teachers in junior and senior primary schools in Enugu State?

Each of the eight related questions from the main instrument for data collection on the level of understanding of continuous assessment among junior and senior primary school teachers in Enugu State was correctly responded to by 1,650 junior and 2,610 senior primary school teachers who constituted the total research subjects. Table IV is a summary of their weighted responses.

Table IV: Mean Level of Junior and Senior Primary School Teachers' Understanding of Continuous Assessment in Enugu State

Teachers' class	No of items	SA	A	D	SD	Total Response	Mean
Junior	8	6,170	5,810	740	480	13,200	3.34
Senior	8	8,910	9,980	1,050	940	20,880	3.29

Analysis of data presented in Table IV shows that the grand mean response on the levels of both junior and senior primary school teachers' understanding of continuous assessment in Enugu State is 3.34 and 3.29 respectively. Each of these means is above 2.5 mean score set for acceptance of minor or no difference. In other words, the result shows that there is a difference in the levels understanding continuous assessment among junior and senior primary school teachers in Enugu State.

Research Question 3

Is there a difference in primary school teachers' perception of continuous assessment according to their years of experience in Enugu State?

Each of the eight related questions from the main instrument for data collection on the level of perception of continuous assessment among primary school teachers, according to their years of teaching experience in Enugu State was correctly responded to by 1,650 teachers who constituted the total research subjects. Table V is a summary of their weighted mean responses, according to years of teaching experience.

Table V: Mean Level of Primary School Teachers' Understanding of Continuous Assessment, According To Years of Experience in Enugu State

Teachers' experience	No of items	SA	A	D	SD	Total Response	Mean
Below 5 years	8	610	550	100	180	1,440	3.10
6 – 10 years	8	2,120	1,870	340	230	4,560	3.29
11 – 15 years	8	3,420	2,250	420	70	6,160	3.46
16 – 20 years	8	9,050	5,570	480	340	15,440	3.51
Above 20 years	8	3,550	2,580	230	12	6,480	3.45

Analysis of data presented in Table V shows that none of the grand mean response on the different levels of primary school teachers' understanding of continuous assessment, according to years of experience, in Enugu State falls below 2.5. In other words, it is acceptable to claim that considering primary school teachers' years of teaching experience, differences exist in their level of understanding of continuous assessment.

Research Question 4

What is the difference between male and female primary school teachers' perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State?

Each of the eight related questions from the main instrument for data collection on the level of understanding of continuous assessment among male and female primary school teachers in Enugu State was correctly responded to by a total of 540 male and 3,720 female primary school teachers who constituted the total research subjects. Table VI is a summary of their weighted responses.

Table VI: Mean Level of Male and Female Primary School Teachers' Understanding of Continuous Assessment in Enugu State

Teachers	No of items	SA	A	D	SD	Total Response	Mean
Males	8	1,820	1,760	500	240	4,320	3.19
Females	8	13,260	14,060	1,290	1,150	29,760	3.32

Analysis of data presented in Table V shows that the grand mean response on the levels of both male and female primary school teachers' understanding of continuous assessment in Enugu State is 3.19 and 3.32 respectively. Each of these means is above 2.5 mean score set for acceptance of minor or no difference. In other words, the result shows that differences exist in the level of understanding continuous assessment among male and female primary school teachers in Enugu State.

Research Question 5

What is the difference in the opinion of teachers in urban and rural primary schools in Enugu State?

Each of the eight related questions from the main instrument for data collection on the level of understanding of continuous assessment among urban and rural primary school teachers in Enugu State was correctly responded to by a total of 2,630 urban and 1,630 rural primary school teachers who constituted the total research subjects. Table VII is a summary of their weighted responses.

Table VII: Mean Level of Urban and Rural Primary School Teachers' Understanding of Continuous Assessment in Enugu State

Teachers' Location	No of items	SA	A	D	SD	Total Response	Mean
Urban	8	8,900	10,070	1,220	850	21,040	3.28
Rural	8	6,180	5,750	570	540	13,040	3.35

Analysis of data presented in Table VII shows that the grand mean response on the levels of both urban and rural primary school teachers' understanding of continuous assessment in Enugu State is 3.28 and 3.35 respectively. Each of these means is above 2.5 mean score set for acceptance of minor or no difference. In other words, the result shows that differences exist in the level of understanding continuous assessment among urban and rural primary school teachers in Enugu State.

Null Hypothesis 1 ($H_0 1$)

There is no significant difference in the responses of primary school teachers on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Table VIII: X^2 Analysis of the Primary School Teachers' Responses on Their Perception of Continuous Assessment in Enugu State

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total (Row)
5	1,730 (188.5)	2,530 (197.75)	-	-	4,260
6	1,850 (188.5)	2,410 (197.75)	-	-	4,260
7	1,850 (188.5)	2,060 (197.75)	240 (22.38)	110 (17.38)	4,260

8	1,860 (188.5)	2,030 (197.75)	230 (22.38)	140 (17.38)	4,260
9	2,070 (188.5)	1,760 (197.75)	190 (22.38)	240 (17.38)	4,260
10	1,750 (188.5)	2,010 (197.75)	350 (22.38)	150 (17.38)	4,260
11	1,890 (188.5)	1,760 (197.75)	240 (22.38)	370 (17.38)	4,260
12	2,080 (188.5)	1,260 (197.75)	540 (22.38)	380 (17.38)	4,260
Column Total	15,080	15,820	1,790	1,390	Grand Total 34,080

(Calculation is based on one-tenth of total responses for each item)

Chi square formula
$$X^2 = \frac{\sum(O-E)^2}{E}$$

X^2 - Cal. = 167.49; X^2 - Crit. at 0.05 level = 32.67; df = 21; Ho = Rejected

Result: There is a significant difference in the responses of primary school teachers on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Null Hypothesis 2 (H₀ 2)

There is no significant difference in the responses of junior and senior primary school teachers on their opinion of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Table IX: Z-test Analysis of Mean Responses of Junior and Senior Primary School Teachers' Perception

School section	N	\bar{X}	S	S ²	Z	Level of sig. (α)	Z-crit.	Decision
Junior	1,650	34.1	1.7	2.89	1.30	0.05	1.96	Accept H ₀ P > 0.05
Senior	2,610	32.8	1.00	.1				

The Intuition

Result: There is no significant difference in the responses of junior and senior primary school teachers on their opinion of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Null Hypothesis 3 (H₀3)

There is no significant difference in the responses of primary school teachers according to their years of experience on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Table X: ANOVA Summary Table on Primary School Teachers' Perception According to Years of Experience

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F-Cal	α	F-Table	Decision
Between	1.28	4	0.32	3.2	0.05	2.64	Reject H ₀ P > 0.05
Within	3.54	35	0.10				
Total	4.82	39					

Result: There is a significant difference in the responses of primary school teachers according to their years of experience on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Null Hypothesis 4 (H₀4)

There is no significant difference in the responses of male and female primary school teachers on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Table XI: Z-test analysis of mean responses of male and female primary school teachers' perception

Teachers	N	\bar{X}	S	S ²	Z	Level of sig. (α)	Z-crit.	Decision
Male	540	31.9	2.40	5.76	-14.00	0.05	1.96	Reject H ₀ P > 0.05
Female	3,720	33.3	0.00	0.00				

Result: There is a significant difference in the responses of male and female primary school teachers on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Null Hypothesis 5 (H₀5)

There is no significant difference in the responses of urban and rural primary school teachers on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Table XII: Z-test Analysis of Mean Responses of Urban and Rural Primary School Teachers' Perception

School location	N	\bar{X}	S	S ²	Z	Level of sig. (α)	Z-crit.	Decision
Urban	2,630	32.9	3.32	11.02	- 6.00	0.05	1.96	Reject H ₀ P >0.05
Rural	1,630	33.5	3.46	11.97				

Result: There is a significant difference in the responses of urban and rural primary school teachers on their perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State.

Discussion of Findings

The results presented in Tables III and VIII showed that teachers acknowledged the need for continuous assessment in primary schools in Enugu State. However, of all the related items considered for their responses for data analysis, there was grand mean of less than 2.5, the benchmark for disagreement with the stated item.

In spite of the seemingly acceptance of continuous assessment as a tool for quality assurance, it is disappointing to note that more than twenty years after its introduction in Nigerian schools, output still remains the same, as found in primary schools in Enugu State. A major contributing factor to this prevailing condition is lack of many good quality teachers who would have enhanced meaningful teaching. Fasasi (2006), earlier noted that as far back as 2004/2005 academic session, 25.65% of teachers in Nigerian schools were not professionally qualified. As a result, despite the teachers' understanding of the need for continuous assessment, their quality of teaching and application of continuous assessment are likely to be low. Consequently, this will have adverse effects on the learners.

In addition, teachers lack facilities to enable them conduct effective continuous assessment due to inadequate funding by appropriate authorities. These facilities, according to Obioma (1984), include diaries, notebooks, textbooks, computers and libraries, to mention a few. When such essential materials are lacking, keeping record of pupils' performance becomes a problem. It is not proper for the authorities that finance education to hope for good outputs when inputs are inadequate.

Findings from Tables V and X showed a significant difference in the responses of primary school teachers, according to their years of experience, on their perception of continuous assessment. While the newly recruited teachers were yet to fully accept and understand the need for continuous assessment, the older ones have done it for many years; hence, they appreciated its advantages. This might simply be that individuals gradually become committed to change. As Macdonald (2006) rightly opined, helping

teachers to change needed time and effort, involving a succession of individual transformations.

Similarly, Tables VI and XI equally reported a significant difference in the responses of male and female primary school teachers in Enugu State, on their perception of continuous assessment. This could be a consequent of sex-role stereotyping which would have arrogated things that deal with science and technology to the masculine gender. Nzewi (2010) observed that Science and Technology were seen as male domain. As a result, the females' upbringing tended to shape them away from Science and Technology. The calculations involved in continuous assessment would likely make female teachers uncomfortable because of the wrong societal expectation that calculations are not reserved for women.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn, with regard to teachers' perception of continuous assessment in Enugu State primary schools:

- (i) Primary school teachers are aware of the contributions of continuous assessment in quality assurance in primary schools. However, there is a significant difference in their responses on their level of perception of continuous assessment.
- (ii) Gender plays a significant role on teachers' level of perception of continuous assessment.
- (iii) Teaching experience determines teachers' level of understanding of continuous assessment.
- (iv) Location is a factor in teachers' perception of continuous assessment.

Recommendations

It is recommended that all primary school teachers in Enugu State, irrespective of gender, location, class allocated and years of experience should be made to undergo regular in-service training that covers all areas of teaching, especially in the area of examination administration as this will contribute immensely towards achieving quality assurance in education at the primary school level.

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