

Teachers' Understanding of Continuous Assessment Practices in Primary Schools in Cross River State and its Impact on Effective Measurement and Evaluation

Abstract

This study examined Teachers' Understanding of Continuous Assessment Practices in Primary Schools in Cross River State and Its Impact on Effective Measurement and Evaluation. The study was motivated by the observed gap between the policy mandate of continuous assessment under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme and its actual implementation in many primary schools. Despite government directives, evidence suggests that many teachers do not fully understand the concept, principles, and techniques of continuous assessment, resulting in improper and inconsistent practices. The study reviewed relevant literature on the concept and principles of continuous assessment, its objectives within the UBE curriculum, challenges to effective implementation, and strategies for improvement. International practices from countries such as Finland, Australia, Ghana, Kenya, and Malaysia were also considered. Findings from the review indicate that continuous assessment is intended to be a systematic, ongoing, and comprehensive process of evaluating pupils across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains using diverse instruments. However, in many primary schools in Cross River State, implementation remains weak. Continuous assessment is often reduced to frequent written tests, with scores entered at the end of the term without documented evidence of ongoing assessment. This practice limits the validity and reliability of measurement and evaluation and undermines instructional decision-making. The review further established that teachers' level of understanding directly affects the quality of evaluation. Adequate understanding promotes the use of multiple assessment tools, proper record-keeping, and the application of results to improve teaching and learning. In contrast,

Review Article

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poor understanding leads to invalid assessment data and failure to achieve the objectives of continuous assessment. The study concludes that for continuous assessment to achieve its goals, teachers must be adequately equipped with knowledge, skills, and institutional support.

Keywords

Continuous Assessment; Teachers' Understanding; Measurement and Evaluation

Introduction

Education is widely recognised as the foundation of national development. For any educational system to attain its objectives, effective measurement and evaluation of learners' performance must be institutionalised. Measurement and evaluation provide empirical data that inform instructional decisions, guide curriculum implementation, and determine the extent to which educational goals are attained. Central to this process at the basic education level is continuous assessment.

Continuous assessment refers to the systematic process

of gathering information about learners' academic progress through various instruments over a period of time. According to Eyong [1], it is a comprehensive method of evaluating learners that relies on multiple tools such as tests, assignments, projects, quizzes, classwork, practicals, and observational records, rather than on a single end-of-term examination. The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Policy on Education and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, made continuous assessment compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools. The policy emphasises that assessment should be ongoing, diagnostic, and used to provide feedback for improving teaching and learning outcomes [2].

Ikani, Eyong, and Ejue [3] observed that the UBE curriculum in Nigeria is structured into three levels: Lower Basic Education (Primary 1–3), Middle Basic Education (Primary 4–6), and Upper Basic Education (JSS 1–3). At each level, teachers are expected to employ diverse assessment practices to monitor learners' progress in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Effective implementation of continuous assessment is therefore expected to enhance academic achievement, identify learning difficulties early, and promote the holistic development of pupils. Despite the policy mandate, available evidence suggests that the practice of continuous assessment in many primary schools in Nigeria, including Cross River State, is unsatisfactory.

Most teachers appear to lack a clear understanding of the principles and procedures of continuous assessment. In several schools, continuous assessment is reduced to repeated administration of similar test items, with minimal attention to variety in assessment tools or to the use of assessment data for instructional improvement. This misconception undermines the purpose of continuous assessment and affects the validity and reliability of measurement and evaluation in schools.

Poor understanding implies that teachers may not gather adequate and accurate information about pupils' learning. Consequently, decisions based on flawed assessment data may be misleading, and pupils with learning gaps may remain unidentified until promotion examinations. This situation raises concerns about the quality of education at the basic level, particularly in Cross River State, where efforts are being made to improve learning outcomes through UBE and other intervention programmes.

Given the central role of teachers in the implementation of continuous assessment, their understanding of its principles and practices is critical. A teacher who is well-grounded in continuous assessment will employ varied instruments, maintain proper records, provide timely feedback, and use results to improve instruction. Conversely, a teacher with limited understanding is likely to practice assessment mechanically and ineffectively. It is against this background that this study examines teachers' understanding of continuous assessment practices in primary schools in Cross River State and their impact on effective measurement and evaluation.

Statement of the problem

Continuous assessment was introduced into the Nigerian education system, and particularly into the Universal Basic Education (UBE) curriculum, to ensure that learners' academic progress is monitored systematically and comprehensively throughout the school year. The policy expects teachers to use a variety of assessment instruments and to maintain proper records that will guide teaching, provide feedback to learners, and inform decision-making. In principle, effective continuous assessment should lead to valid and reliable measurement and evaluation of pupils' performance. However, observations and reports from school supervisors, head teachers, and other education stakeholders in Cross River State indicate that the practice of continuous assessment in many primary schools falls short of these expectations. There are concerns regarding inconsistent and improper implementation. Specifically, a significant number of teachers do not maintain up-to-date continuous assessment records. In some instances, assessment scores are entered into report sheets at the end of the term without evidence of tests, assignments, or other assessment activities conducted during the term. This practice defeats the purpose of continuous assessment, which is intended to be an ongoing process. Furthermore, many teachers rely predominantly on written tests and end-of-term examinations as the sole instruments of assessment. Other essential components, such as projects, practical activities, quizzes, classwork, and observational techniques designed to assess learners in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, are largely neglected. This narrow approach suggests a limited understanding of the scope and principles of continuous assessment as stipulated in the UBE curriculum. The implication of this gap is significant. When teachers do not

fully grasp the requirements of continuous assessment, they are unable to gather adequate, valid, and reliable data on pupils' learning. As a result, measurement and evaluation become ineffective. Pupils' learning difficulties may not be identified early, instructional decisions may be based on incomplete information, and the feedback necessary to improve teaching and learning may be absent. Ultimately, this undermines educational standards and compromises the quality of basic education in the state. Given that teachers are the key implementers of the curriculum, their level of understanding of continuous assessment practices is critical to the success of measurement and evaluation in primary schools. Yet, empirical evidence on the extent to which primary school teachers in Cross River State understand continuous assessment and how this understanding affects their evaluation practices remains limited.

Concept and principles of continuous assessment in primary schools

Continuous assessment is a systematic and ongoing process of evaluating pupils' academic performance throughout the school term rather than relying on a single end-of-term examination. The concept recognises that learning develops gradually, and therefore evaluation should also be continuous.

According to Eyong [1], continuous assessment is a comprehensive method of gathering information about learners through the use of multiple assessment instruments over a period of time. It is designed to monitor pupils' progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide data that can be used to improve teaching and learning. In the context of primary schools, continuous assessment requires teachers to regularly engage pupils in tests, assignments, projects, classwork, practical activities, and observation, and to use the results to determine the level of learning that has taken place across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. For continuous assessment to achieve its purpose, it must be guided by fundamental principles:

- i. **Systematic and well-planned:** Assessment activities should be scheduled and carried out at regular intervals throughout the term.
- ii. **Comprehensiveness:** Assessment should cover all areas of pupils' development, not only cognitive ability but also attitudes, values, and practical competencies.

iii. **Use of multiple instruments:** No single test can measure all aspects of a child's ability. Teachers are expected to use varied tools to obtain a balanced picture of performance.

iv. **Validity and reliability:** Assessment instruments must measure what they are intended to measure and produce consistent results.

v. **Diagnostic and formative orientation:** The goal is to identify learning difficulties early and provide feedback to guide both teacher and pupil.

vi. **Proper and cumulative record-keeping:** Teachers are expected to maintain accurate records of all assessment activities so that the final grade reflects performance over the entire period.

Objectives of continuous assessment in the UBE curriculum

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria places strong emphasis on continuous assessment as a strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning at the basic education level. The Federal Republic of Nigeria [2], in the National Policy on Education, stated that continuous assessment should be used to monitor pupils' progress, provide feedback, and guide instructional decisions. The policy stresses that assessment must be ongoing and comprehensive, covering the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. One objective of continuous assessment under UBE is to track pupils' academic performance throughout the school year. Omede and Obi [4] noted that continuous assessment helps teachers to identify learning difficulties early and to provide remedial instruction before pupils fall behind. This regular monitoring ensures that teaching is responsive to pupils' needs. Another objective is to promote the holistic development of learners.

Okeke and Eze [5] explained that continuous assessment is designed to evaluate not only pupils' academic knowledge but also their attitudes, values, and practical skills through varied instruments such as projects, observations, and practical activities. Continuous assessment also aims to ensure fairness, validity, and reliability in evaluation. Nworgu [6] pointed out that using multiple assessment tools over time reduces the influence of factors such as test anxiety that can affect performance in a single test.

Furthermore, Ede and Ede [7] stated that continuous assessment provides useful information for decision-

making regarding promotion, placement, and certification of pupils, and for evaluating the effectiveness of the UBE programme.

Teachers' level of understanding of continuous assessment practices and lessons from other countries

A major challenge identified is the limited level of teachers' understanding of continuous assessment practices in primary schools. Many teachers perceive continuous assessment as the frequent administration of written tests, rather than a systematic and ongoing process involving multiple instruments to evaluate learners in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains [2]. This narrow understanding has resulted in poor implementation. Teachers often fail to keep accurate and up-to-date records, and in some cases, assessment scores are entered at the end of the term without evidence of the activities that produced them.

The use of varied instruments such as projects, observations, and practical activities is largely ignored. This has led to several consequences. First, the objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme have not been fully realized. Continuous assessment was introduced to monitor learning continuously and to provide feedback to guide instruction. However, assessment has in many cases become a routine exercise for completing report sheets. Omede and Obi [4] found that in many Nigerian primary schools, continuous assessment scores are often compiled at the end of the term. This practice compromises the validity of measurement because the scores may not reflect pupils' performance throughout the term.

Second, evaluation and decision-making in schools have been weakened. Reliance on written tests alone leads to the neglect of other important areas of learning. Adegoke and Adewumi [8] observed that this has produced pupils who may perform well in examinations but lack practical skills and other competencies. Consequently, decisions on promotion, placement, and instructional planning are based on incomplete information.

Third, the effectiveness of continuous assessment has been limited by inadequate formative practice. Ede and Ede [7] noted that irregular assessment encourages rote learning and reduces opportunities for timely intervention. Other countries have addressed similar challenges

through deliberate reforms. In Finland, teacher education programmes emphasise assessment as an integral part of teaching. Volanen and Atjonen [9] explained that Finnish teachers use portfolios, self-assessment, peer assessment, and descriptive feedback, supported by professional autonomy and regular training. In Australia, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [10] institutionalised assessment literacy programmes and moderation processes. Teachers are trained to use multiple assessment tools and to maintain cumulative records, with digital platforms supporting transparency.

In Ghana and Kenya, policy reform and in-service training have been central. Ampiah and Adu-Yeboah [11] reported that Ghana revised its teacher training curriculum to include practical courses on continuous assessment. Ngware, Oketch, and Ezeh [12] noted that Kenya developed school-based assessment guidelines and provided teachers with assessment toolkits to reduce overreliance on written tests. Malaysia addressed the challenge through the integration of technology. Tan and Deneen [13] stated that Malaysian teachers use digital applications to record classwork, assignments, and observations, thereby reducing workload and enhancing monitoring. The experiences of these countries suggest that regular retraining of teachers, provision of assessment toolkits and digital systems, and effective monitoring by school authorities are essential for improving practice.

Impact of teachers' understanding of continuous assessment on effective evaluation

Teachers' understanding of continuous assessment practices is a key determinant of the effectiveness of evaluation in primary schools. When teachers possess adequate knowledge of the concept, principles, and techniques, they are able to collect data regularly, employ diverse instruments, and interpret results to improve learning. One impact is on the accuracy and validity of evaluation. Teachers who understand continuous assessment recognise that evaluation should not be limited to written tests. They incorporate projects, practical activities, and observation to assess learners across domains.

Okafor and Bello [14] found that primary school teachers with higher assessment literacy produced more valid

evaluation results because their scores reflected pupils' performance across multiple tasks and periods. Another impact is on the use of evaluation for instructional improvement. Continuous assessment is expected to be diagnostic and formative, providing feedback that enables teachers to adjust instruction. Teachers with adequate understanding are more likely to use assessment data to identify learning gaps and modify teaching strategies. Understanding also influences documentation and transparency. Nwachukwu and Eze [15] observed that after training workshops, teachers improved their record-keeping practices and maintained assessment portfolios for each pupil. This enhanced transparency and enabled school heads and parents to track pupils' progress with credible evidence.

Strategies for improving teachers' understanding and practice of continuous assessment

To enhance teachers' understanding and practice of continuous assessment, the following strategies are recommended: Regular In-Service Training and Professional Development: Workshops and seminars focused on assessment principles, instrument development, and data interpretation can update teachers' knowledge and skills. Provision of Assessment Guides and Instructional Materials: Standardised guides, recording templates, rubrics, and checklists can support teachers in planning, administering, and documenting assessment across domains. School-Based Mentoring and Peer Collaboration: Mentoring by experienced teachers and collaboration through professional learning communities can promote consistency in assessment practices and scoring. Integration of Technology in Assessment and Record Keeping: Simple digital platforms for recording and storing assessment data can reduce workload and improve tracking of pupils' progress over time. Effective Supervision and Monitoring by School Authorities: Regular supervision and feedback from head teachers and inspectors can ensure adherence to assessment procedures and standards.

Summary

Continuous assessment is a vital component of teaching and learning in primary schools. It is designed to evaluate pupils' progress continuously across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The effectiveness

of continuous assessment depends largely on teachers' understanding and application of its principles. This paper examined the concept, objectives, and importance of continuous assessment in basic education. It revealed that teachers' level of understanding directly influences the quality and validity of evaluation. Implementation challenges include inadequate training, heavy workload, lack of materials, and weak supervision. Strategies such as training, provision of materials, mentoring, technology integration, and supervision were discussed as necessary for improvement.

Conclusion

This study examined Teachers' Understanding of Continuous Assessment Practices in Primary Schools in Cross River State and Its Impact on Effective Measurement and Evaluation. The review established that continuous assessment is a systematic and ongoing process central to the UBE programme. Its principles include systematic planning, comprehensiveness, use of varied instruments, validity, reliability, diagnostic orientation, and proper record-keeping. The objectives include monitoring progress, early identification of learning difficulties, promoting holistic development, and providing data for decision-making. However, limited teacher understanding has led to weak implementation, with assessment often reduced to written tests and late entry of scores. This undermines validity, reliability, and instructional decision-making. Lessons from other countries indicate that teacher training, toolkits, technology, and supervision can address these challenges. It is recommended that stakeholders prioritise regular training, resource provision, mentoring, technology use, and monitoring to strengthen continuous assessment practice.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge in the following ways:

- i. Context-specific evidence: It provides empirical data on primary school teachers' understanding of continuous assessment in Cross River State, addressing a gap in state-level literature.
- ii. Link between teacher competence and assessment quality: It clarifies the relationship between teachers' conceptual understanding and the validity of measurement and evaluation. Focus on primary level challenges:
- iii. It identifies specific bottlenecks to effective continuous

assessment at the basic education level. Policy and training implications:

iv. Findings can inform SUBEB, NTI, and Colleges of Education in designing targeted teacher development programmes. Theoretical relevance: The study extends assessment theories within the Nigerian primary school context by demonstrating how teacher understanding impacts validity, reliability, and feedback.

Companies that adopt entrepreneurial marketing can better discover, create, evaluate, and use attractive entrepreneurial opportunities; and this high level of entrepreneurship enables the entrepreneurial marketing

processes of large companies to effectively and efficiently create and renew a competitive advantage. These findings show that in free markets, entrepreneurial marketing processes can be used strategically to create higher value for customers and company owners. The results showed that small companies use entrepreneurial marketing in more dimensions than older companies. Also, the results showed that younger companies use fewer dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing that affect performance. Younger firms are more able to derive value from entrepreneurial strategies in the form of higher organizational performance growth rates than their older counterparts and also the companies that are managed by their own institutions have better performance.

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