

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND THE PRACTICE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN ANAMBRA STATE PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS (ISSUES AND CHALLENGES)

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Abstract

Philosophy of Education guides the practice of continuous assessment as it is through Philosophy of Education that the practice of continuous assessment is critically examined. In Anambra State public schools, the laborious nature of continuous assessment has made some teachers tend to avoid it. Consequently, this work aimed at examining Philosophy of Education and the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools in order to identify its challenges and proffer strategies for better results. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 266 public secondary schools principals in Anambra State. No sampling was done owing to the manageable size of the population. Data were collected with researchers-developed questionnaire titled “the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools questionnaire” (PCAAPSS). The questionnaire was validated by three experts in from Measurement and Evaluation and Curriculum Studies Unit in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained by pilot testing the instrument using similar respondents in Enugu State Nigeria which yielded a mean reliability coefficient of 0.78 using Cronbach alpha statistics. Mean was used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that lack of standardized assessment tools, insufficient qualified teachers and negative attitudes of teachers towards continuous assessment constitute the challenges to the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools. The study further revealed that training of sufficient qualified teachers to acquire psychometric skills, motivation of teachers through enhanced salary and regular supervision of teachers are the strategies for tackling the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among other things that school administrators are to ensure that resource persons are invited to train teachers on effective teaching modalities especially as it concerns continuous assessment. This will help them internalize the mechanisms of ensuring continuous assessment of students.

Introduction

One of the landmarks in the Nigeria education system is the introduction of continuous assessment as an important component of education in 1981. Continuous assessment as a method of evaluating learners’ progress was proposed in the National Policy on Education in 1977. In the same 1977, an implementation taskforce was set up under the Chairmanship of the Late Professor S. D. Onabamiro to prepare a blueprint for the implementation of the new policy. A taskforce was set up for the purposes. The Federal Government white paper on the report of the implementation taskforce came out in 1979. On the basis of this recommendation, the Federal Ministry of Education started series of workshops to this end in 1979 and continued till 1981 on the operation, popularization and instrumentation in respect of continuous assessment (UBEC, 2007).

Continuous assessment refers to the mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour systematically takes account of all his performances during a given period of schooling time (Adekule, 2019). Zhu (2024) on the other hand defined continuous assessment as a method of evaluating the progress and achievement of students in

educational institutions. The major points in the two definitions include the fact that continuous assessment: (a) covers a wide area of the student behaviour (b). accumulates records concerning each student from the day of entry for a study to the day of completion (c) is used to guide the development of the child while the learning is in progress.

In the expressions of Ugwu (2018), the rationale for continuous assessment resides in the fact that National Development and Planning require comprehensive assessment of the citizenry such that there would be a proper matching of students to social roles. Besides, assessment is an integral part of the teaching-learning process. According to Black and Wiliam (2020), another rationale for its introduction is that it would facilitate the reinforcement of correct and desirable behaviour and give a chance of correcting unwanted behaviour pattern before reaching habit level as well as facilitating proper and appropriate guidance services to students. Thus, continuous assessment encourages good study habit which makes for innovation, creativity and inquiry in education. It makes students alert and current in their studies and also reduces the volume of work needed to be revised before examinations. Another important rationale for the introduction of continuous assessment lies in the fact that it considers the whole person cognitively, emotionally and psychometrically (Brown, and Harris, 2021). And by this, it encourages the development of good moral and psychomotor behaviour (Wiliam, 2020). According to Ugwu (2018), continuous assessment aims at getting the truest possible picture of each student's ability, at the same time helping each student to develop his or her abilities to the fullest. It is a method whereby the final grading of students takes into account in a systematic way of their whole performance during a given period of schooling.

The National Policy on Education (1977, revised in 1981, 2004, 2013) illustrated clearly that educational assessment and evaluation will be liberalized by basing them in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual. This assessment approach has been described as being systematic, cumulative, comprehensive, objective, and guidance-oriented (Adekule, 2019). Leung and Graf (2023) explained that continuous assessment is said to be systematic in the sense that it requires an operational plan. That is, there is a plan as regards how it should be implemented. The plan indicates what are to be measured, when and how the measurements are to be done. Its comprehensive nature can be seen in the fact that it assesses the three major domains of learning such as the cognitive, the psychomotor and the effective using diverse assessment techniques like observations, interviews, assignment, essay, objective, sociometric and projective tests among others (Popham, 2022). The cumulative nature of this approach is reflected in its insistence that any decision to be made at any point in time on the student takes into account all previous decisions about him. This requires the keeping of all records on each student. Continuous assessment is guidance oriented because information got is used to guide the student's further development (Adekule, 2019).

In its' nature, continuous assessment is laborious (Ugwu, 2018). This is given that it involves teaching, testing, keeping of records, writing of reports among others. Good assessment is best achieved through the combination of different types of assessment techniques. The instructional outcomes come under the cognitive, effective and psychomotor domains of learning (Reeves, 2024). Taras (2021) narrated that there are six different categories in the cognitive domain namely; knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Affective domain has to do with values, social relations, interest, emotional adjustment, habits or life style (Wang, Davier, & Von, 2022). The psychomotor domain deals with manipulative skills and body movements. As such, in continuous assessment, the achievements of students in these domains are readily, systematically and comprehensively determined. To this end, teachers and educators should shun all forms of one-sided assessment in the area of cognition, affection or psychomotor behaviour as the learner ought to be assessed holistically as he is a cognitive, affective and psychomotor animal (Shute and Zapata-Rivera, 2023). According to Ugwu (2018), while questionnaire could be used to assess affective behaviour, projects and observations could be effectively used in schools to assess students' psychomotor behaviour.

The foregoing reveals the importance of continuous assessment and the peculiarity of its' execution in schools. The practice of continuous assessment is one of the ideals of education which Philosophy of Education studies. As expressed by Onebunne (2018), given that philosophy of education deals with the guidelines, policies and ideas that are used to monitor the ways schools should be managed, it becomes pertinent to construct an effective Philosophy of Education capable of guiding the practice of continuous assessment towards the achievement of its objectives. In Anambra State, the researchers' visit to various some secondary schools revealed that various secondary school teachers struggle with keeping up with continuous assessment. This could be as a result of their struggle with coping with the laborious demands of continuous assessment or possibly other factors that are yet to be ascertained. This motivated the researchers to take another look at the issues and challenges circling the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra state public secondary schools in the light of philosophy of education. The researchers feel that a study of this nature could help motivate the educational stakeholders to find answers to the lingering issues and challenges bedevilling the continuous assessment practice in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the fact that philosophy of education deals with the guidelines, policies and ideas that are used to monitor the ways schools should be managed, it has becomes pertinent to ensure an effective philosophy of education capable of guiding the practice of continuous assessment towards the achievement of its objectives.

The necessity of continuous assessment lies in the fact that it facilitates the reinforcement of correct and desirable behaviour as it gives the teacher a chance of correcting unwanted behaviour pattern before reaching habit level as well as facilitating proper and appropriate guidance services to students. These benefits notwithstanding, the researchers' visit to various some secondary schools revealed that various secondary school teachers struggle with keeping up with continuous assessment. This could be as a result of their struggle with coping with the laborious demands of continuous assessment or possibly other factors that are yet to be ascertained. This motivated the researchers to take a closer look at the issues and challenges circling the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra state public secondary schools in the light of philosophy of education. Attaining the lofty aims of secondary education may not be possible without the optimal job performance of secondary school teachers. As much as it seems that some teachers in Anambra state secondary schools are doing their job diligently to ensure optimal job performance, some others appear not to care much especially when they avoid the use of continuous assessment. These challenges point the finger on issues or challenges that they may be facing. This influenced the researchers' interest to ascertain these issues and challenges in a bid to lay the foundation for sustainable solutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools?
2. What are the causes of the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools?
3. What are the strategies for tackling the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools?

Method

The descriptive survey research was used for this study. Mbah and Udegbe (2012) describe descriptive research design as a type of research in which a group of people or item are considered to be representative sample of the entire group. This design was ideal for use in this study, because the study is involved in collecting data from 266 public secondary schools principals in Anambra State with a view to examine Philosophy of Education and the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools. The population of the study consisted of 266 public secondary schools principals in Anambra State. No sampling was done owing to the manageable size of the population. Data were collected with researchers-developed questionnaire titled "the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools Questionnaire" (PCAAPSS). The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part 1 was the introductory part and contained statements that

sought information on the respondents' status. Part 2 comprised 15 items that were organized under 3 sections namely challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools, causes of the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools and strategies for tackling the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools. The respondents were requested to indicate their opinions on four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). Two experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka validated the instrument.

The questionnaire was validated by three experts from Measurement and Evaluation and Curriculum Studies Unit in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained by pilot testing the instrument using similar respondents in Enugu State Nigeria which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.78, 0.76 and 0.82 and a mean reliability coefficient of 0.78 using Cronbach alpha statistics. For data analysis, the three research questions were answered using mean ratings. Based on the 4-point rating scale, the decision rule that any mean score from 2.50 and above was taken as agree, while mean score below 2.50 was taken as disagree.

Results

Research Question One: What are the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean rating of respondents on the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools (N=266)

S/N	Items on the Challenges of the Practice of Continuous Assessment in Anambra State Public Secondary Schools.	School Principals x (Mean)	Decision
1	Lack of standardized assessment tools.	3.98	Strongly Agree
2	Inadequate recording facilities.	3.92	Strongly Agree
3	Insufficient qualified teachers with psychometric skills	3.10	Agree
4	Negative attitudes of lazy teachers towards continuous assessment.	3.08	Agree
5	Inadequate supervision of the continuous assessment.	4.00	Strongly Agree

Results in table 1 showed that all the items have mean ratings above the cut-off point of 2.50. The table also showed that items 1, 2, 5 were responded positively in strong agreement with the statements. Items 3 and 4 were responded positively in agreement. Hence, they agreed that items 1, 2,

3, 4 and 5 are the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools. It can be interpreted that the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools are lack of standardized assessment tools, inadequate recording facilities, insufficient qualified teachers with psychometric skills, negative attitudes of lazy teachers towards continuous assessment and inadequate supervision of the continuous assessment.

Research Question Two: What are the causes of the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools?

Table 2: Mean rating of respondents on the causes of the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools (N=266)

S/N	Items on the Causes of the Challenges of the Practice of Continuous Assessment in Anambra State Public Secondary Schools.	School Principals x (Mean)	Decision
6	Absence of committed personnels in the practice of continuous assessment.	3.90	Strongly Agree
7	Inadequate funding of the practice of continuous assessment.	3.10	Agree
8	Failure to train sufficient qualified teachers to acquire psychometric skills.	3.80	Strongly Agree
9	Failure to motivate teachers in the practice of continuous assessment.	3.06	Agree
10	Lack of committed personnels in the supervision of the continuous assessment.	3.88	Strongly Agree

Result in table 2 revealed that all the items have mean ratings above the cut-off point of 2.50. The table also revealed that the respondents strongly agreed with items 6, 8, 10 while they agreed with items 7 and 9. Hence, they agreed that items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 are the causes of the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools.

Research Question Three: What are the strategies for tackling the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools?

Table 3: Mean rating of respondents on the strategies for tackling the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools (N=266).

S/N	Items on the Strategies for Tackling the Challenges of the Practice of Continuous Assessment in Anambra State Public Secondary Schools.	School Principals x (Mean)	Decision
11	Establishment of standardized assessment tools that meet the criteria of validity and reliability.	4.00	Strongly Agree

12	Provision of recording facilities for keeping of accurate and up-to-date assessment records.	3.90	Strongly Agree
13	Training of sufficient qualified teachers to acquire psychometric skills.	3.24	Agree
14	Motivation of lazy teachers through enhanced salary to be faithful to the continuous assessment.	3.08	Agree
15	Regular monitoring of continuous assessment through the use of committee system.	3.88	Strongly Agree

In the result as shown in table 3, all the items have mean rating above 2.50 indicating that the strategies stated in the items should be used for tackling the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools.

Discussion

According to the responses of research question one, 266 public secondary schools principals in Anambra State agreed on the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools as lack of standardized assessment tools, inadequate recording facilities, insufficient qualified teachers with psychometric skills, negative attitudes of lazy teachers towards continuous assessment. This finding was in line with the finding of Adekule (2019) which indicated that the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment are absence of uniform methods of evaluation, unreliable recording system, uncommitted teachers and lack of adequate supervision of the continuous assessment.

In research question two, 266 public secondary schools principals in Anambra State agreed on the causes of the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools as absence of committed personnels in the practice of continuous assessment, inadequate funding of the practice of continuous assessment, failure to train sufficient qualified teachers to acquire psychometric skills, failure to motivate teachers in the practice of continuous assessment and lack of committed personnel in the supervision of the continuous assessment. This finding was in consistent with the finding of Ugwu (2018) which revealed that the problems of continuous assessment in Nigeria are caused by uncommitted staff, poor funding of the exercise, insufficient manpower for the programme and poor supervision of the continuous assessment.

The responses to research question three revealed that 266 public secondary schools principals agreed that establishment of standardized assessment tools that meet the criteria of validity and reliability, provision of recording facilities for keeping of accurate and up-to-date assessment records, training of sufficient qualified teachers to acquire psychometric skills, motivation of lazy teachers through enhanced salary to be faithful to the continuous assessment and regular monitoring of continuous assessment through the use of committee system are the strategies for tackling the

challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools. This finding supported the finding of Adekule (2019) that the strategies for tackling the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Nigerian schools are proper funding of the programme, adequate teachers' financial remuneration, availability of valid and reliable tests, adequate and well qualified staff and sustained supervision of the continuous assessment.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that lack of standardized assessment tools, inadequate recording facilities, insufficient qualified teachers with psychometric skills, negative attitudes of lazy teachers towards continuous assessment constitute the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools. The study also revealed that absence of committed personnel in the practice of continuous assessment, inadequate funding of the practice of continuous assessment, failure to train sufficient qualified teachers to acquire psychometric skills, failure to motivate teachers in the practice of continuous assessment constitute the causes of the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools. The study additionally revealed that establishment of standardized assessment tools that meet the criteria of validity and reliability, provision of recording facilities for keeping of accurate and up-to-date assessment records, training of sufficient qualified teachers to acquire psychometric skills, motivation of lazy teachers through enhanced salary to be faithful to the continuous assessment and regular monitoring of continuous assessment through the use of committee system are the strategies for tackling the challenges of the practice of continuous assessment in Anambra State public secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Government at all levels should establish standardized assessment tools that meet the criteria of validity and reliability. This will aid the teachers to ensure that feel motivated to regularly give the students continuous assessment tests.
2. School administrators are to ensure regular supervision of teachers to ensure that they do give students continuous assessment tests as at when due.
3. School administrators are to ensure that new teachers are taken through the rigours of teaching orientation. This will help them internalize the mechanisms of ensuring continuous assessment of students.
4. There should be adequate teachers' motivation of teachers by the government. This will ensure that teachers continuously feel the need to execute their duties efficiently including giving the students continuous assessment as at when due.

5. School administrators are to ensure that resource persons are invited to train teachers on effective teaching modalities especially as it concerns continuous assessment. This will help them internalize the mechanisms of ensuring continuous assessment of students.

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