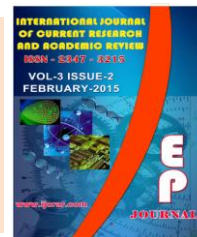




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Evaluation of continuous assessment practices in higher institutions of learning in Enugu State; Nigeria

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Continuous assessment, Pre-lecturers, Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of education

A B S T R A C T

The paper investigated the continuous assessment practices in Higher institutions of learning in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. One hundred and eighty-four (184) lecturers proportionately drawn from one each of the Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of education in the State, were sampled for the study. A researcher-developed 4 point questionnaire and attitudinal scale respectively were used for data collection. Percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the three research questions formulated for the study while t-test and ANOVA were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that the most frequently used instrument for continuous assessment at higher institution of learning were test (quiz) and homework. It equally revealed that lecturers have negative attitudes towards the implementation of continuous assessment policy as spelt out in its guidelines. Based on the findings, it was recommended that continuous assessment should be enshrined as a course of study in all the tertiary institutions of learning to enable Pre-lecturers acquire the required skills and attitudes in implementing the Continuous assessment policy.

Introduction

Assessment could be described as a process of making judgment on a person or a situation based on available evidence, (Torrance, 2004). Oguneye in Esere and Idowu (2011) explained assessment as means whereby the teacher obtains information about knowledge gains, behavioural changes and other aspects of the development of learners. Assessment could be formal or informal in nature and as well

as carried out in both formal and informal education systems.

Before 80's, the assessment of students for certification at the end of every program or course in Nigeria schools was done under one-shot examination. Such examination denies the teacher the opportunity of participating fully in the final assessment of his or her pupils. It also assesses only the

learner's cognitive aspect of behaviors and ignores the other two behavior domains (Psychomotor and Affective). One-shot end-of-course examination does not take into account the child's performances throughout the entire period of schooling,(Habor-Peters,1999). These inherent problems then gave birth to a new educational policy in Nigeria known as Continuous Assessment in early 80's.

Continuous assessment is a mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behavior takes account in systematic way, all of his performance during a given period of schooling (FRN, 2004). In other words, it is a situation where there is a continuous making of judgment on the learner during and not only at the end of a program.

According to Ohuche (1989), it is expected that the teacher or other stakeholders could find out at any point of a child's learning process, how he knows and thinks, what his interest, emotions, attitudes and values are; and how he uses his hands, feels and other parts of his body. In ascertaining all these from the learner, emphasis is not placed only on end-of a program examination, rather, other assessment instruments like tests, assignments, projects, observation, interview, homework, are used.

A more comprehensive definition of continuous assessment was given by Ezewu and Okoye (1986) as a systematic and objective process of determining the extent of a student's performance in all the expected changes in his behavior, from the day he enters into a course of study and a judicious accumulation of all pieces of information derived from this purpose with a view to using them to guide and shape the

student and to serve as basis for making important decisions about the child.

The emphasis is that continuous assessment is systematic, comprehensive, cumulative and guidance-oriented. It is systematic because it is well planned, graded to suit the age and experience of the children which is given at suitable intervals during the school year. It is comprehensive because it embraces all the knowledge, skills, interest and attitudes of the learner. In other words, it assesses the cognitive, the psychomotor and the affective domains of the learners. Continuous assessment is cumulative because it involves all performance data of a learner in all his school period which must be pooled together before a decision is made of him. Finally it is guidance-oriented because the information obtained from it about a learner is used for further and future guidance.

In view of these, Federal Ministry of Education (FRN, 2004) placed emphasis on how continuous assessment should be implemented at all levels of educational system. It was specified that Continuous assessment shall constitute part of the overall achievements of the learner. While it contributes 40% and end of year examination 60% for primary and secondary schools, it is 30% and 70% for continuous assessment and final examinations in the higher institutions of learning.

However, it is not certain whether lecturers at higher Institutions of learning observe the specified characteristics of Continuous assessment which serve as standard for successful implementation the program. This study therefore sought to find out different continuous assessment practices by lecturers at higher institutions of learning in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1 What are the frequently used continuous assessment instrument tools in higher institutions in Enugu State?
- 2 What is the attitude of lecturers towards implementing continuous assessment in higher institutions of learning in Enugu State?
- 3 To what extent does the continuous assessment practices in higher institutions of learning in Enugu State, done according to the established standard?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean attitudes of lecturers in the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics towards continuous assessment practices.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean attitudes of male and female lecturers in higher institution on continuous assessment practices.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. 184 Lecturers were proportionately sampled from three purposively selected higher institutions in Enugu state. The included 84 University lecturers, and 50 lecturers each from Colleges of Education and 50 from Polytechnics respectively in the State. Researcher-developed-4point scale questionnaire and attitudinal scale respectively were used for data collection.

Researchers administered the instruments directly to the lecturers. Frequency, percentages mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistic and ANOVA were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Mean scores below the mean cut-off of 2.50 were considered negative attitude and low extent while mean scores above 2.50 were considered high attitude and high extent respectively.

Result and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the frequently used continuous assessment instrument tools in higher institutions in Enugu State?

Table 1. shows that the most frequently used continuous assessment tool in higher institutions in Enugu State is test (quiz) with the highest percentage response of 31.52%. That was followed by homework and practical which were 21.20% and 11.41% respectively. Open discussion, debate, excursion were ranked low in their usage for assessment. Finally, other instruments like questionnaire, sociometric, interview and observation were not used. That indicates that lecturers agreed that they do not use them in any way while assessing their students.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of lecturers towards continuous Assessment practices in Enugu State?

The table 2 shows that all the items recorded mean attitudes less than the bench mark of 2.50. The pooled mean of 1.93 which is equally below the bench mark indicated that lecturers have very low attitudes towards the use of continuous assessment in higher institutions in Enugu State.

Research Question 3: To what extent is the continuous assessment practices in higher institutions in Enugu State done according to the established standard?

The table 3 shows that most of the mean responses of some items which measured the extent continuous assessments are conducted in higher institutions in Enugu State were observed to fall below the bench mark of 2.50. The pooled mean of 2.47 equally fall below the bench mark. This is indication that lecturers agreed

that continuous assessment carried out in higher institutions in the State, do not meet up with continuous assessment standard.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the mean attitude of lecturers in the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics towards continuous assessment practices in Enugu State.

Table 4, showed the calculated F-cal (4.02) is greater than the table value F-Crit. (3.71) at 0.05 level of significance and (2, 10) degree of freedom. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative accepted. It is concluded that there is a significant difference between the lecturers from Universities, Colleges of education and Polytechnics on their attitudes towards continuous practices.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female lecturers towards continuous assessment practices in higher institutions in Enugu State.

Table 5 shows that the t-calculated value of 1.33 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96, hence the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference

in the attitudes of male and female lecturers towards continuous assessment practices in higher institutions in Enugu state.

It is evident from the above result that the frequently adopted instruments for continuous assessment in higher institutions of learning in Enugu State are tests, homework and practical. This simply implied that much emphasis are still on assessing the cognitive and psychomotor domains which those instruments measure ; while less emphasis are put in assessing the affective domain which sociometric, questionnaire, observation and interview measure. This is in line with Habor-Peters (1999) who observed that most assessments in schools continued to be on cognitive, assessments on behavior, attitude, interest and industry of the learner are neglected. The inherent problem to that according to her is that it is not possible to obtain the overall picture of the individual being assessed.

The result further revealed that the attitudes of lecturers in higher institutions towards continuous assessment practices is low extent. This may imply that lecturers do not conduct continuous assessments while some that conduct, sometimes do not use the scores, but based on their assessments on semester examinations only.

Again, the result revealed that Continuous assessment practices in higher institutions do not fully meet up with the continuous assessment standards. For instance, in Table 3, although lecturers responses show that the systematic are observed, other characteristics are not fully observed. Also, on the comprehensiveness of continuous assessment characteristics are not fully observed other characteristics. For instance, on the comprehensiveness of continuous assessment, lecturers' responses show that various continuous assessment instruments

are used but the three domains are not always fully captured. This was affirmed by the result in table 1 which shows that assessment instruments most frequently used are on cognitive domain.

The finding does not support with the Tyler's model of evaluation which emphasizes on the learners having all round evaluation which includes the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Stressing on the need to assess the entire domains, Olomolaye in Esere and Idowu (2011) stated that the latent skills, knowledge and abilities of learners could be discovered only when teachers used tests to gain information on their cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains. The responses under the guidance oriented characteristics of continuous assessment showed that it is not fully observed as lecturers in tertiary institutions neither take time to discuss continuous assessment performances with students nor guide them on their future careers based on those performances.

Finally, the results further showed that attitudes of lecturers towards Continuous assessment practices is not gender biased. The result further showed that there are differences among lecturers from different institutions on continuous assessment practices. Lecturers from Polytechnics and some departments and Faculties in the University seem to lack the fundamental skills for implementing continuous assessment since it was not part of their training programs when they were studying. This is unlike other Lecturers from colleges of education and faculties of education that had lectures on assessment as part of their program.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated continuous assessment practices in higher institutions of learning in Enugu state. It is a fact that the introduction of continuous assessment policy in every level of Nigeria educational system was aimed at eradicating the inherent problems of one –shot examinations among which is the assessment of only the cognitive domains of the learner. Since the problems seems to persist, the following recommendations are made:

1. Continuous assessment should be made a course which should be offered in every higher institution of learning as a general course of study for all students. That will equip graduates with required skills and attitudes to implement it if they end up becoming lecturers in the future.
2. Ministries of education and proprietors of private tertiary institutions of learning should endeavor to organize regular in-service trainings and workshops on every category of lectures on effective implementations of continuous assessments.
3. Every institution should set up a continuous assessment committee that will be mandated to monitor various ways lecturers implement continuous assessment in their institutions. This will ensure that lecturers do not abuse the exercise but strictly stick to the guideline.

Table.1 Frequency Distribution of Continuous Assessment Instruments Used in Higher Institutions in Enugu State

	Assessment Tools	Frequency response	Percentage (%)	Rank in Usage
1	Class works	19	10.33	4
2	Tests	58	31.52	1
3	Projects	18	9.78	5
4	Sociometrics	0	0	9
5	Excursions	5	2.72	8
6	Practicals	21	11.41	3
7	Debates	9	4.89	7
8	Open discussions	15	8.15	6
9	Home works	39	21.20	2
10	Questionnaire	0	0	9
11	Observations	0	0	9
12	Interviews	0	0	9
	Total	184	100	

Table.2 Mean Analysis of the Attitude of Lecturers towards Continuous Assessment Practices in Higher Institutions

S/no	Item Statement	X	SD	Remark
1	I seldom give continuous assessment to students.	2.33	1.42	Low attitude
2	I derive joy conducting continuous assessment to students.	2.11	0.98	“
3	I normally get scared if I remembered that I should conduct. continuous assessment	2.08	1.73	“
4	I find it difficult to articulate the three domains in my assessment instruments.	1.41	0.59	“
5	I prefer using end of semester Exam scores instead of including continuous assessment scores.	2.13	1.21	Low attitude
6	I see continuous assessment challenging so I prefer someone else conducting it on my behalf.	1.36	0.59	Low attitude
7	I rarely adhere to continuous assessment guidelines.	2.10	2.09	“
		Pooled mean (x)	1.93	Low attitude

Table.3 Mean Analysis on the Extent Continuous Assessment Practices in higher Institutions meet up the Establishment Standard

S/no	Item Statement	X	SD	Remark
1	In my institution, students are assessed at regular intervals	2.61	1.21	High extent
2	Continuous assessment in my institution is done in predetermined intervals which everyone is aware.	2.03	1.19	Low extent
3	Various assessment instruments are used in assessing students' abilities.	2.53	1.43	High extent
4	Lecturers ensure that assessments cut across all the three domains.	1.85	0.98	Low extent
5	Lecturers ensure that assessment scores of every learner are part of their final grade in each semester.	3.11	1.55	High extent
6	Lecturers pool together continuous assessment scores with examinations to take decision of student abilities.	2.96	1.36	“
7	Lecturers most often discuss continuous assessment performances with their students.	2.25	1.33	Low extent
8	Students are regularly guided on their future career based on their continuous assessment performances.	2.38	1.41	“
	Pooled mean (x)=	2.47	Low extent	

Table.4 Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) on Attitude of Lecturers In Universities, Colleges Of Education Polytechnics towards Continuous Assessments

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-cal	F-table	Decision
Between	86.7	2	43.35	4.02	3.71	Reject
Within	107.8	10	10.78			Ho
Total		12				

Table.5 t- test Analysis of Male And Female Lecturers Attitudes Towards Continuous Assessment Practices In Higher Institutions

Sex	N	X	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Male	86	3.26	0.94	182	1.33	1.96	
Female	98	3.10	0.67				

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