

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING TEACHERS ATTITUDE AND COMMITMENT TOWARDS CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This research paper focuses on strategies to improve teachers' attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment in secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study involves a population of 5,800 teachers, with a sample size of 135 teachers selected using a multi-stage procedure. Data collection is done through a questionnaire called Strategies for improving Teachers' Attitude and Commitment Towards Continuous Assessment (1TACTCA), which has good reliability. The data is analysed using mean scores and a t-test, revealing negative attitudes such as poor time management and inadequate preparation among teachers. The recommendations include monitoring teachers' implementation of continuous assessments, providing regular re-training on ethical practices, and encouraging commitment to enhance academic activities in schools.

Keywords: Teachers, attitude, commitment, continuous assessment.

Introduction

Background to the Study

Historically, from ancient societies to modern nations, education as a tool has proven most potent in the struggle for survival, growth and development. The relevance of education to mankind also goes a long way to show its significance to the socio-economic and politico-cultural development of any human society in any part of the world. Little wonder Obidike and Onwuka (2012) affirms that education is fundamental to all kinds of development, be it human, political, economic, social or intellectual, but more importantly, human resource. Education is what happens to us from the day we are born till the day we die (Wokocha, 2012). Formally, education occurs in schools through a process known as teaching and learning.

School here is a place of academic enterprise. According to Bentley (2006), The word school derives from Greek *σχολή* (*scholē*), originally meaning "leisure" and also "that in which leisure is employed", but later "a group to whom lectures were given. Louis (2017) identified the school as the place where adolescents spend most of their daily time, interacting and socializing with others. It is the natural social setting for them. The social setting moulds children into future managers of the economy. Secondary school is an educational institution intended for children who have completed primary education and have not yet entered tertiary education. The Federal Government of Nigeria, as mentioned in Ezenwekwe's National Policy on Education (NPE) in 2013, defines secondary school as the stage where children receive education after primary school and before the tertiary level. It serves as a transitional phase between primary and tertiary education. The Mauritian Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2014) states that secondary school education aims to facilitate the achievement of the

four pillars outlined in the Delors Report, which are acquiring knowledge, developing practical skills, fostering personal growth, and promoting social cohesion. It should also provide the adolescent student with the necessary skills that allow him/her to adjust easily and smoothly to the rapid physical, emotional, mental and social changes (Garcia & Santiago. 2017). Teaching and learning takes place among secondary schools; this pious duty has been the sole responsibility of a teacher.

Traditionally, a teacher is commonly understood as someone who educates in schools or colleges. However, a teacher is also a trained individual who provides learning opportunities to students. According to Obidike (2016), a teacher is someone who imparts knowledge or facilitates learning through activities, materials, and guidance, whether in formal or informal settings. Similarly, Kimani, Kara, and Njagi (2013) suggest that teachers play a crucial role in transmitting knowledge, values, and skills during the learning process. This highlights the significance of teachers in individuals' lives and society as a whole. A competent teacher employs various teaching methods, utilizes diverse instructional materials, and employs different assessment techniques to evaluate students' progress at the end of an instructional or academic program. In order to determine whether learning has occurred, teachers continuously assess their students using various assessment tools. This process of evaluating students is commonly known as assessment (Alufohai and Akinlosotu, 2016). Assessment refers to the collection of data by a teacher about the outcomes of their teaching, which is then used for further improvement. It is a procedure employed by teachers to determine whether students have acquired the expected knowledge and to what extent behavioural objectives have been achieved. Mwebaza (2010) further asserts that assessment is a means of obtaining information in curriculum implementation to make decisions regarding student learning, curriculum and programs, as well as education policy matters.

Evidently, assessment in schools is an ongoing process, leading to the prevalence of continuous assessment as the method of evaluating students' learning outcomes throughout a learning period. Okonkwo (2012) defines continuous assessment as an evaluation method that assesses learners' achievements in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains from the beginning to the end of their learning journey. This is done using scores obtained from various instruments and techniques such as tests, projects, rating scales, checklists, observations, interviews, and other possible methods. According to Obe as cited in Akanni (2019), continuous assessment encompasses the systematic appraisal of students' performance in class tests, homework assignments, projects, and other school activities during a specific school period, such as a term, semester, year, or the entire duration of a course. The rationale behind continuous assessment in schools is that students who are continuously assessed tend to achieve better results compared to those assessed solely through a single examination (Mwebaza, 2010; Nneji, Fatade & Awofala, 2012).

In line with the National Policy on Education, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2013) emphasized the adoption of continuous assessment as an integral part of educational evaluation at all levels. As a result, continuous assessment can be defined as a method of evaluating students' progress and achievements in educational institutions, aiming to obtain an accurate depiction of each learner's abilities and assisting them in maximizing their potential.

Alufohai and Akinlosotu (2016) posit that continuous assessment is a method of evaluating the progress and achievement of learners in educational institutions with the aim of getting the true possible picture of each learner's ability and helping each to develop his/her abilities to the fullest. Ethiopians Ministry of Education (MoE, 2011:119) pointed out that an essential element of the move to personalized learning is the use of assessment for learning (formative assessment) as well as assessment of learning (*summative* assessment). Teachers are encouraged to use a range of assessment techniques that are appropriate to the learning activities of the students in order to fulfil the primary aim of assessment which is to support learning. As to Kapambwe (2010), the objectives of the continuous assessment are twofold: firstly, to promote the use of formative assessment so as to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Secondly, to establish a regular system of managing implementation of the programme or curricula. Similarly, Arega (2014) documented considerable evidence that continuous assessment is a powerful instrument for enhancing the attainment of learning outcomes to ensure quality education and academic excellence in the education institutions.

Despite the emphasis placed by authorities on the academic benefits of continuous assessment in schools, recent observations suggest that teachers have shortcomings when it comes to implementing continuous assessment in their classrooms. These shortcomings are evident in the various attitudes displayed by teachers.

Attitude is a psychological concept that relates to a person's mental and emotional characteristics. According to Mulala (2015), attitude can be defined as a learned inclination or tendency of an individual to respond positively or negatively to objects, situations, concepts, or other individuals. Reid and Marcinkowski (2019) argue that attitudes reflect our evaluation of something or someone, based on our knowledge, feelings, and behaviours, which subsequently influence our future actions. Attitudes have an impact on performance, and performance, in turn, influences attitudes.

The significance of addressing issues related to teachers' attitudes cannot be underestimated in ensuring the successful implementation of continuous assessment. Just as attitudes are crucial for success in various life activities, they also play a vital role in the context of education. For instance, if a person develops a positive attitude towards their job, it is likely to have a positive effect on their chances of achieving success in that job. A positive attitude acts as a motivating factor, driving an individual to strive for excellence in any activity they are involved in. Conversely, a negative attitude can hinder progress and success. For instance, Yoloye (2009) mentioned teachers use of only one technique to obtain scores. Odelola (2015) identified teachers use of (one-shot) form of examination for making decisions while Ellington and Earl (2007); Ntiko (2015) identified teachers' exhibition of limited knowledge, inability to submit to learning new expertise, incompetence in planning and improper implementation on accordance with objective of the lesson were lapses Pound among teachers.

In support of this, Sarwar (2011) identified the following reasons as major challenges in implementing continuous assessment, these among other things include: large class, teaching/ learning resources and teachers' attitude. Brookhart (2012) opined that teachers' negative attitude towards test instrument used is a way to have what they perceived as negative consequence for their students. That is, when the tester uses a

wrong instrument for his/her testee, then the objective of such test has been thwarted. Birehanu (2014) argued that continuous assessment programme can only succeed if teacher implements it accordingly. Stressing that in a situation where a teacher does not have a clear understanding of its basic philosophy and procedures for implementation, then its success will be in question. In other words, teachers must understand continuous assessment procedures and its basic philosophy so as to achieve the objectives and such understanding comes through orientation, assistance to individual teacher, training and retraining.

Marso and Pigge (2013) sees lack of orientation and assistance from the concerned individuals, insufficient training and lack of adequate materials as factors that make H difficult for teachers to appreciate and implement continuous assessment as expected of them. Invariably, conflicting teachers' attitudes towards continuous assessment equally affect its effective implementation in most schools (Brookhart, 2012).

In this regard, Ojo (2008) maintain that many teachers only adopt questions from the items of text books or public examinations for use in their classrooms. Of course, this practice reveals teachers' lackadaisical attitude and lack of competence in conducting and implementing continuous assessment. These attitudes among teachers make a jamboree about their commitments towards ensuring effective use of continuous assessment in schools. A committed teacher not only makes effective use of continuous assessment tools in school but ensures that students are responding to such loot.

Teacher commitment is therefore defined by Altun (2017) as a motivational force that inspires teachers to invest more lime and energy in student achievement. Teachers' commitment to their students and their job is an essential aspect that captures the attention of educators. Cox (2017) argues that dedicated teachers enjoy working with their students and genuinely care about their growth. Altun (2017), as cited by Dave and Rajput, further emphasizes that committed teachers make significant efforts to enhance teaching and learning by employing various approaches. Therefore, teacher commitment involves the psychological connection between the individual teacher, the school, the subject matter or goals, and the intention to maintain organizational membership and go beyond personal interest.

In Cox's (2017) research, Dave and Rajput identified five dimensions of teachers' commitment. The first dimension is commitment to the learner, which entails displaying genuine affection, willingness to assist, enthusiasm, friendship, and concern for the holistic development of students. The second dimension is commitment to society, which involves recognizing and caring about the impact of teachers' work on community development, democratic values, and the nation. The third dimension is commitment to the profession, which encompasses developing a professional ethic and a sense of vocation. The fourth dimension is commitment to achieve excellence in all aspects of a teacher's roles and responsibilities, showing care and dedication in the classroom and school. Finally, the fifth dimension is commitment to basic human values, aspiring to be a role model in both the classroom and the community by consistently practicing professional values such as impartiality, objectivity, intellectual honesty, and national loyalty. These dimensions of attitudes contribute to a teacher's high level of commitment to their job.

Irrespective of these observed attitudes, some authorities have recommended strategies for teachers' improvement. Ojo (2008) earlier emphasized on re-training of teachers so that they are conversant with continuous assessment strategies which in turn will boost their commitment to duty while Asale (2017) recommended use of portfolio assessment, self-assessment, projects, interviews and conferences, quizzes, test and examination. Despite these recommended strategies, it seems that professionals are not yet satisfied because these studies were not related to secondary school teachers in Anambra state. Hence, the researcher is poised to examine strategies for improving teachers attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment as it concerns secondary schools in Anambra state Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Continuous assessment has traditionally been utilized as an educational method to evaluate the cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor progress of students in schools. In order to achieve this, it is necessary for students to actively participate in all school programs right from the start of an instructional program. Despite the fact that continuous assessment encompasses the evaluation of students' cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor development, recent observations indicate a decline in teachers' positive disposition towards its use. This decline has resulted in a decrease in teachers' dedication to implementing continuous assessment. Moreover, these observations have revealed that many teachers no longer assess students' affective and psycho-motor activities; instead, they assign grades solely based on students' performance in cognitive assessments. The researcher expresses concern about this practice of awarding grades in areas that were not tested, as it may negatively impact students' future performance and achievements. Additionally, the researcher has noticed other negative behaviours among teachers, such as tardiness and neglecting their responsibilities, which may further limit opportunities for conducting continuous assessments. However, the researcher acknowledges a lack of knowledge regarding other attitudes displayed by secondary school teachers in Anambra State, which presents a challenge in this study. To address this issue, the researcher aims to investigate strategies for enhancing teachers' attitudes and commitment towards continuous assessment in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to analyse methods for enhancing teachers' disposition and dedication to continuous assessment in secondary schools located in Anambra State. More specifically, the study aims to:

1. Explore the attitude and commitment of teachers regarding continuous assessment in secondary schools.
2. Identify strategies that can be employed to enhance teachers' attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment in secondary schools.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes and commitments of teachers towards continuous assessment in secondary schools?
2. What strategies can be employed to enhance teachers' attitudes and commitments towards continuous assessment in secondary schools?

The research hypotheses were as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in the attitudes and commitments of urban and rural secondary school teachers towards continuous assessment in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant difference in the strategies used by urban and rural secondary school teachers to improve their attitudes and commitments towards continuous assessment in Anambra State.

Method

This study utilized a descriptive survey design in the region of Anambra state. The study population consisted of 5,800 teachers, with 3,522 being urban teachers and 2,278 being rural teachers. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed to select the sample for the study. Proportionate sampling was used to choose three secondary schools from each of the three educational zones in Anambra state. From each selected school, 15 teachers were randomly selected using a balloting method without replacement. This resulted in a total of 13 teachers selected as the sample for the study. Data collection was carried out using a researcher-structured questionnaire consisting of 26 items. The questionnaire was distributed to 135 secondary school teachers, and 127 completed questionnaires were returned and used for the study. The questionnaire was titled "Strategies for Improving Teachers' Attitude and Commitment towards Continuous Assessment (TACTCA)" and had a reliability coefficient of 0.76 and 0.74 for clusters A and B, respectively. The overall reliability coefficient was 0.75, determined using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient technique.

The analysis of the data involved calculating mean scores to answer the two research questions, and a t-test was used to test the hypothesis at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

Research Question 1: What are teachers' attitude and commitments towards continuous assessment in secondary schools?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	Decision
1	Late resumption of school each term	43	51	18	15	127	2.96	Accept
2	Display of bias in articulating resumption exercise for students	21	ii	45	50	127	2.02	Reject
0	Skipping of duty	54	39	19	15	127	3.03	Accept
4	Poor preparation of lesson notes and lesson plan	40	57	13	17	127	2.94	Accept
5	Delay in assigning projects to students	22	26	41	38	127	2.25	Reject
6	Proper recording of students assessment Scores.	48	42	16	21	127	2.92	Accept
7	Regular use of affective and psycho-motor activities as assessment technique.	9	15	57	46	127	1.90	Reject
8	Ensuring that students participate meaningfully during assessments in school.	27	16	49	35	127	2.81	Reject
9	Poor use of time in engaging students in motor activities	41	41	14	24	127	2.81	Accept

10	Nonchalant attitude of teachers in improvising needed materials	33	44	28	22	127	2.69	Accept
11	Use of test, assignment and examination scores for assessments	56	49	13	9	127	3.20	Accept
12	Informal relationship with students leading to lousiness.	18	10	41	58	127	1.90	Reject
13	Show of favouritism in marking students Projects	43	36	29	19	127	2.81	Accept
14	Abandoning students at the laboratory for other activities	19	26	47	35	127	2.22	Reject
15	Collecting gifts for marks from students who didn't do their projects	8	6	53	60	127	1.70	Reject
16	Constant assigning speech to a particular student	21	9	57	40	127	2.08	Reject
17	Training and use of set of student for quiz competition	4!	60	10	16	127	3.00	Accept
18	Engaging students in farm work as continuous assessment	33	48	20	26	127	2.70	Accept

Analysis in table 1 above shows that the mean scores from item 1-18 were 2.96, 2.02, 3.03, 2.94, 2.25, 2.92, 1.00, 2.27, 2.81, 2.69, 3.20, 1.90, 2.81, 2.22, 1.70, 2.08, 3.00 and 2.70 respectively. Items 2, 5, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15 and 16 were rejected because their mean scores were below 2.50. Other items were accepted because their mean scores were 2.50 and above.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies for improving teachers' attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment in secondary schools?

Table 2: Strategies for improving teachers' attitude and commitments towards C.A

S/N	OEMS	SA	A	0	SD	N	X	Decision
19	Constant re-training of teachers on Implementation of continuous assessment in secondary schools	51	60	10	6	127	3,22	Accept
20	Allocating enough time for continuous assessment	37	43	20	27	127	2.70	Accept
21	Provision of sufficient instructional materials for use by teachers	49	37	23	18	127	2.92	Accept
22	Only licensed teachers should teach in secondary schools	61	56	4	6	127	3.35	Accept
23	Teachers should he paid on time to avert use of school hours for other means of income	41	55	19	12	127	3.00	Accept
24	Cordial relationship between teachers and students	54	52	9	12	127	3.55	Accept
25	Use of autocratic leadership styles to monitor teachers on implementation of	17	10	48	52	127	1.93	Reject

	C.A							
26	Providing teachers with enough stationeries for recording of C.A Scores	33	49	28	17	127	2,77	Accept

Analysis in table 2 shows that mean scores from item 19-26 were 3.22, 2.70, 2.92, 3.35, 3.00, 3.55, 1.93 and 2.77 respectively. Item 25 was rejected because its mean score is below 2.50. others were accepted because their mean score were above 2.50 the approved mean.

Hypothesis 1

Urban and rural secondary school teachers do not significantly differ in attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3

t-test comparison of opinions of urban and rural teachers on their attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment

Respondents	N	SD	X	t-cal	Df	a	T-crit	Decision
Urban	81	3.85	2.96					Accept
			1.328	152	.05	1.980		Null Hypothesis
Rural	46	3.28	2.11					

On the table 3 above, t-cal (1.328) is less than t-cal (1.980), therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, Urban and rural secondary school teachers do not significantly differ in attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment in secondary schools in Anambra state.

Hypothesis 2

Urban and rural secondary school teachers do not significantly differ in strategies for improving teachers' attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment in Anambra State.

Table 4

t-test comparison of opinions of urban and rural secondary school teachers on strategies for improving teachers attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment

Respondents	M	SD	X	t-cal	Of	A	T-crit	Decision
Urban	51	3.51	2.61					Accept
		1.810	25	.05	2.069			Null Hypothesis

Rural	10	3.08	2.20
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On the table 4 above, t_{cal} (1.810) is less than t_{crit} (2.069), therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there male and female teachers do not differ significantly in strategies for improving teachers attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment in secondary schools in Anambra state.

Discussion of findings

Analysis from Table 1 showed teachers' attitude and commitments towards continuous assessment in secondary schools. Findings reveal that teachers attitude that conflict with their commitment include late resumption of school, skipping of duty and poor lesson preparation. These findings are similar to Owan and Agunvva (2019) reported in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State that many teachers especially those in public secondary schools do not report to duty as expected. They exhibit unfavourable attitude to punctuality and in teaching. Many head teachers complain of some staff not writing lesson notes and demonstrating a high degree of absenteeism. It was also revealed that teachers' record student's assessment scores properly. This finding agrees with Nkemakolam (2010) discovered that proper recording of students' scores helps not only to compute students results but serve as an important records in school that might be demanded by supervisors during inspections. Some other attitudes of teachers include poor use of time to engage students in motor activities, nonchalant attitude of teachers in improvisation but applauded teachers use of test, assignment and examination scores for assessments. Sahit, et al (2016) pressed that time if not managed could lead to frustration. Teachers must plan their lessons taking cognizance of time allotted to each class to correspond with the school time table.

Lack of improvisation as an attitude among teachers in this study agree with earlier study of Onyemerekeya (2010) revealed that majority of teachers with poor knowledge of improvisation had flaws teaching their students when the real instructional materials were in small quantity in school. Onyemerekeya lamented that this were as a result of poor training most teachers received during their academic days in teacher training institutions It was also reveal that teachers allocate marks to student they are familiar with especially in their projects, favour particular students during certain training and use set of students for quiz competition. Teachers also engage students in farm work as continuous assessment. Commenting on favouritism, Odum (2012) discovered that many teachers today have been compelled in using their assessment results of selected students for computing their terminal report cards only as against identifying students' weakness and for remedial. Onyemerekeya (2010) had similar observation where particular students were constantly used as leaders in class discussions, This not only make other students feel inferior, but they said students often been invited sometimes feel superior and untouchable in respect to discipline. Commenting on teachers engagement of students in labour as continuous assessment, the findings of Diise, Zakaria and Mohammed (2018) faulted this finding and consistently insist that for students to understand agricultural science as school subject, learners must be subjected to farm work which is semi-workshop and where what was theoretically learnt is practised. Students who failed to participate in this exercise are liable to fail.

Analysis from table 2 showed strategies for improving teachers' attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment in secondary schools. Findings show that constant retraining of teachers on continuous assessment implementation, allocation of enough time for continuous assessment, provision of sufficient instructional materials, employing only licensed teachers, early payment of teachers, cordial relationship between teachers and students as well as providing teachers with enough stationeries for recording continuous assessment scores were strategies to improve teachers attitude and commitment towards continuous assessment in secondary schools. Onyemerekeya (2010) also suggested re-training of teachers on annual basis but added timely payments of their monthly salaries. Nkemakolam (2012) mentioned allocation of time to certain school subjects to accommodate certain assessments that are experimentally based, while Bossaert, et al (2011) insist that relationships among teachers and students should be cordial and not informal. Okoye (2007) submitted that teachers must use various assessment techniques to evaluate students' achievement.

Conclusion

Teachers exhibit numerous attitudes towards the adoption of continuous assessment and their attitudes determine commitment to the teaching job.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, the researcher proposes the following suggestions:

1. Supervision of teachers' implementation of continuous assessments by secondary school administrators is advised. This measure will prompt teachers to take their responsibilities more seriously and become more dedicated to their work.
2. It is recommended that teachers receive ongoing training on the ethical aspects of the teaching profession. Additionally, they should align their attitudes with these ethical principles in order to enhance academic performance within the school.

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