TOWARDS RETRAINING OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, ON CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES FOR STANDARDS IN SCHOOLS IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract
This *study was carried out to examine how retraining of primary school teachers on Evaluation (continuous assessment) techniques can effectively enhance comparability of standard between primary schools in Nigeria. The population of the study consisted 50 primary schools in Ebonyi State. While, the sample comprised of 500 teachers selected through stratified sampling techniques. The researcher used a descriptive survey design for the study to Chance generalization of findings. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The instrument for data collection titled Retraining of Teachers on Continuous Assessment Techniques (ROTOCAT) questionnaire was developed by the researcher was* face *and content validated by three experts in Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. Cronbach -alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded 0.83. Percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypothesis, at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that the primary school teachers have very low information and knowledge about the objectives of continuous assessment. Equally, they lack the computation skills in terms of grading and reporting. In view of the above, the paper recommended among other things that Federal and State governments should as a matter of urgency organize biannual seminars and workshops for primary school teachers on the development and implementation* of continuous *assessment; this is in addition to supplying of curriculum modules on assessment to primary schools.*

Keywords: Retraining, primary school teachers, standard, evaluation, content.

Introduction

Standard, according to Della (2005) is the level that is considered to be acceptable, or the level that someone or something has achieved or attained.

For the purpose of this study, the issue of concern under comparability of standard will be;

- How to ensure that, there is uniformity in quantity and quality of lesson delivery in different schools, using the same course content.

- How to ensure quality (reliability) in evaluation instruments, construction, administration, scoring and grading procedure, and

- How to ensure valid and realistic reporting of assessment results in order to maintain high standard and compare inter school performances. In the light of the above therefore, the researcher

views standard as a situation where they are uniformity in lesson delivery using appropriate instructional materials, construction of reliable test items, administration of tests, scoring, grading procedure and reporting in order to maintain high standard, and compare inter-schools or states performance.

Basically, evaluation can be viewed and used in two perspectives, first as a process of taking decision and making value judgments about events, objects or characteristics of a person or persons. In this sense, it is quantitative and must be receded by measurement. Secondly, evaluation could be viewed and used in a broader sense as a process of seeking, obtaining and quantifying data in order to make value Judgment about objects, events or their characteristics. This connotes that evaluation is both quantitative and qualitative.

Harbor Peters (1999), asserts that evaluation is the systematic process of determining the extent to which instructional objectives are achieved by learners. She further explains that the systematic process of evaluation implies a controlled observation of pupils change in behaviour, when they have been exposed to some contents. It should be known that the aim of evaluation is to interpret measured performance of students. Such measured performance is the assigned scores and the interpretation of the scores by the lettered grades.

On the other hand, Singh (2008) states that evaluation is the systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information to determine the extent to which pupils are achieving instructional objectives.

Evaluation of pupils learning requires the use of a number of techniques for measuring their achievement; it plays a significant role in effective teaching. It begins with the identification of the intended learning outcomes and ends with a judgment concerning the extent to which the learning outcomes have been attained.

The Evaluation procedure adopted in Nigeria for some years now is known as Continuous Assessment. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1985:14), continuous assessment is; *A mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour takes account, in a systematic way, of all his performance during a given period of schooling, such an assessment involves the use of a great variety of modes of evaluation for the purpose of guiding and improving learning and performance of the students.*

The handbook on Continuous Assessment goes on to describe continuous assessment as systematic, comprehensive, cumulative and guidance oriented.

The rationale for adopting continuous assessment is to abolish the one shot end-of-course examination, and adopt a periodic test that will form the students' overall grading, which must be done by the classroom teacher. Such tests are in form of class works, assignments, weekly tests and quizzes. While the objectives of continuous assessment are;

a.   To have something to report on to parents and some interested others.

b.   To diagnose learning difficulties in individuals strengths and weaknesses in group performance for the purpose of improving

instruction.
c.   To assess special attitudes and interests of students for counseling purposes.
d.   To identify levels of ability, achievement, and affective development for various individuals and groups of students.
e.   To assess group gains in achievement on co-operatively developed standardized instruments in the evaluation of some locally introduced innovative programmes.

At this juncture, one may ask, whether the rationale for adopting continuous assessment is being realized in practical terms?. Do teachers understand the nitty-gritty in assessment procedure, such as involving the process of identification of the intended learning outcomes, knowledge of construction of various forms of test, analysis of the raw scores (data) and ending with value judgment on the learners' attainment.

It is unfortunate to observe that in Nigeria, Continuous Assessment is fraught with many problems including that of quality standards (Nworgu, 2003). He further states that this could arise from the differences in the quality of tests and other assessment instruments used in different schools.

It is observed that apart from the qualitative difference, the way and manner tests or assessment instruments are developed and administered in various schools present problems in scoring and grading of achievements in the various school subjects. The above statements imply that there are fundamental procedural faults on continuous assessments in schools, starting with the poor knowledge of most teachers in developing reliable teacher-made tests, and converting the students raw scores to standard units of measures. That is (measure of relative position or standard) thereby making unreliable judgment. Therefore, given the nature of continuous assessment procedure, and to maintain quality standard , it becomes imperative to retrain the primary school teachers on Continuous Assessment techniques.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the study was to examine how retraining of primary school teachers on continuous assessment techniques will effectively enhance quality standard (performance) in schools

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study
1.   To what extent are primary school teachers aware of the objectives of continuous assessment?
2.   How knowledgeable are primary school teachers on the proper construction of test items (teacher-made-tests) used in continuous assessment?
3.   Which areas of continuous assessment techniques do primary schools teachers need retraining to enhance quality standard?

Hypothesis
The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significant level
HOI: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female primary school teachers on the areas of retraining on continuous assessment techniques
Methodology
The study adopted descriptive survey design because it sought opinion from primary school teachers for their retraining on continuous assessment techniques.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all the 12, 573 public primary school teachers in Ebonyi State, which is made up of three education zones

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Stratified random sampling technique was employed in selecting 500 primary school teachers from the three education zones of the state. Thus, 260 males and 240 females

Instrument for Data Collection

The researcher developed a questionnaire titled, Retraining of Teachers on Continuous Assessment Techniques (ROTOCAT). The questionnaire has two sections, A and B. Section A sought information on the background of the respondents, while section B consisted of twenty items which sought information on the retraining of primary school teachers on continuous assessment techniques. A four-point rating scale was provided for the respondents to indicate the strength of their opinions as follows; Strongly Agree (SA). Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Validity of Instrument

The instrument was validated by two experts, one in Psychology and one in Measurement and Evaluation at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. These experts were requested to critically examine the instrument in terms of relevance of the contents and clarity of the rating scales. Their corrections and inputs were used to modify and produce the final instrument.

Reliability of Instrument

To ensure the internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher used a test reetest method, using 40 primary school teachers in Afikpo North Local Government area who were not part of the study. The internal consistency reliability index of the data collected were computed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, which yielded a co-efficient index 0.83. The value was considered high enough to conclude that the test instrument was reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher employed the services of research assistants who helped to distribute and administer the questionnaires to 500 primary school teachers.
They were filled and collected back within three days; the return rate was 100%

Method of Data Analysis

Percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, while t-test was used to test the   hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance
Results
The result of the study were analyzed according to the research questions as Follows:
Research Question 1
To what extent do primary school teachers have information (awareness) on the Continuous assessment aims and objectives?

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of primary school teachers, who have information (awareness) on continuous assessment objectives,

Gender	Have information	No information	Total
Male	120(46.2%)	140(53.8%)	260
Female	105(44%)	135(56%)	240

It could be observed from the above data that the percentage of primary school teachers who are aware or have information about the continuous

assessment objectives is low. Males had 46.2% while females had 44% as against 53.8% males and 56% females who had no information.

Research Question: 2

How knowledgeable are primary school teachers on the proper construction of continuous assessment (teacher-made-test?

Table 2: knowledge of primary school teachers on proper construction of test items (teach-: made-test).

S/n	Knowledge of teachers on test construction,	Gender	
		Male 260	Female 240
1	Setting of questions to reflect the taxonomies of educational objectives	63(24.2%	47(19.5%)
2	The use of test blue print to develop teacher- made-test.	45(17.3%)	27(11.2%)
3	Setting questions to cover all the three domains,	105(40.3%)	112(46.6%)
4	Use varieties of assessment techniques such as assignment and project etc,	64(24.6%)	78(32.5%)
5	Analyzing test scores using percentages,	106(40.7%)	86(33.8%)
6	Analyzing test scores using mean and standard deviation	48(18,4%)	52(21.6%)
7	Scoring and conversion of scores to a comparable unit, known as measure of relative standing.	18(7%)	21(8.7%)
8	Keeping termly and cumulative record (report) on pupils cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.	22(8.4%)	12(5%)

Grand percentage .Male 21.2% and Female 21.7%. From the data above, it is revealed that the primary school teachers general have no or very low knowledge on the proper construction of teacher-made-tests. The over all percentages of male is 21.2% while that of female is 21.7%.

Research Question 3

Which area(s) of continuous assessment techniques do primary school teachers need retraining for the purpose of uniformity and standard.

Table 3: Areas of Retraining of Teachers on Continuous Assessment.

S/n	Item N=500	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1	Organization of seminars and workshops on the use of primary school curriculum modules	3.37	0.69	Agree
2	Mandatory training and retraining of teachers on test development processes	3.63	0.88	Agree
3	Special training on the areas of taxonomy of education objectives	2.82	0.74	Agree

4	Scoring and conversion of scores to a comparable unit (statistical skill) known as measure of relative standing	2.86	0.89	Agree
5	Use of assignments, projects, observations and peer appraisal techniques	3.27	0.84	Agree
6	Proper record keeping and continuity of records on pupils, cognitive, affective and psychomotor development	3.39	0.72	Agree
7	The formation and assigning of responsibility to continuous assessment subject teams or committees	3.72	0.64	Agree

Given a 2.5 mid-point in the 4-point scale on the areas of retraining of primary school teachers on continuous assessment, data on table 3, revealed an over-whelming agreement on the areas suggested. Hence all the items were rated above the cut-off mean of 2.5. This is arrived at thus: 4+3+2+1 =10/4 =2.5

Hypothesis 1:
There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the areas of retraining on continuous assessment. **Table 4:** t-test of difference between the mean ratings of male and female primary school teachers in Ebonyi State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	P>0.05
Male	260	2.38	1.24	498	1.29	1.96	
Female	240	2.11	1.05				

P>0.05, Accept Ho 1

From table 4, it is observed that at 0.05 level of significance, the t- critical value of 1.96 is greater than the calculated t-value of 1.29. The null hypothesis is therefore upheld, showing that, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female primary school teachers on the areas of retraining on continuous assessment.

Discussion
The findings of the study as indicated in table 1 showed that primary school teachers have low information on the objectives of continuous assessment. For males, 46.2% have information while 53.8% have no information. Also 44% females have information while 56% them have no information. This situation is highly inimical to the realization of the aims and objectives of continuous assessment, because no meaningful reforms in Continuous Assessment can be achieved without proper awareness of the reforms, especially on the part of the teachers. The primary school teachers need to be adequately informed on the objectives of continuous assessment. Information is very essential because according to turner (2003), nations

growth and development is anchored on it. The data on table 2, reveals that the primary school teachers generally have no or little knowledge on proper construction of teacher-made-tests. This is evident in their percentage responses of 21.2% for males and 21.7% for females. It is not surprising to observe that they have faint or low knowledge on the issue because they were not properly taught. Yet they are the people implementing continuous assessment at the primary school level, which is the bed rock upon which all other educational development rests (FRN, 2004). Mkpa and Izuagba (2003), point out that, no matter what the curriculum is, it is the teachers who interpret and implement it.

The findings on table 3, show that primary school teachers did not differ in their agreement on the retraining of primary school teachers in areas of continuous assessment techniques.

Hence there was an over-whelming agreement of the areas suggested. Most of the primary school teachers cannot effectively implement continuous assessment, unless they are retrained nation-wide with the same curriculum modules, instruments, equipment and other instructional materials.

Retraining is necessary because Mgbako (1992) says that teaching is an open capacity exercise and its effectiveness ultimately rests not solely upon the methods used but on personal formation of teachers as reflective and compassionate professionals. Equally, it has been proved that teachers can only be effective agents of change if they have the where-withal, in terms of knowledge, skills and resources. Therefore, the retraining of the present primary school teachers in continuous assessment techniques is necessary so as to maintain

acceptable level of academic standard that will be comparable any where in the Federation.

From the data in table 4: it was observed that there was no significant difference in the responses of male and female teachers on the areas of retraining on continuous assessment. The implication of this is that primary school teachers acquisition of adequate continuous assessment techniques (skills and competencies) will improve the quality and standards of continuous assessment in schools and even states.

Conclusion

This study focused on retraining of primary school teachers on continuous assessment techniques for standards in schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. From the findings majority of the teachers are virtually ignorant about the objectives, operations and the techniques of continuous assessment. They overwhelmingly agreed on a retraining programme on continuous assessment for all the teachers.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that;

1. Government should supply and make available the curriculum modules to all the primary schools in the Federation, including other instructional materials for retraining of teachers on continuous assessment techniques.

2. State Government as a matter of urgency should organize bia annual seminars and workshops for primary school teachers on the implementation process of continuous assessment.

3. The continuous assessment committees in schools, local, and state

government should be reconstituted and made functional by providing all the necessary logistic support by the government.

4. Teachers' training institutions such as Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education of Universities should ensure proper teaching of continuous assessment techniques to their students, using specialists in Measurement and Evaluation or in related areas.

5. To ensure uniformity and quality, assessment, a regulatory body should be set up, different from the assessment committee that should monitor and regulate continuous assessment practices in the nation's school system.

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