

Techniques of Continuous Assessment in Schools

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Introduction

Concept of Continuous Assessment

When a teacher teaches, he has some set objectives to achieve. The success of his teaching depends on how far and how well these objectives are attained. He can only ascertain that the objectives are achieved by asking students to perform tasks which testify that the learning behavior has been acquired. Such tasks of which the teacher asks the students to perform are forms of assessment techniques. The accumulation of students' performances in these tasks given at stated intervals constitute continuous assessment. The quality of students' work is judged by various pieces of works throughout the duration of the course rather than at the end. Frequent analysis of the learners' performance is made while their understanding and skills unfold and the results taken into account at the end of it all. Thus, student's aspects of learning activities are assessed to produce a final evaluation. The assessment is regular and the task can verify which development process the student is going through. It progresses with the information of how the students performed, what went smoothly, what went less smoothly and the things the teacher will still have to work

on. Continuous assessment can take the form of regular observation and assessment of practical skills, attitudes, verbal language, or insight into theoretical concepts. It can take place within contact moments such as lectures, projects, practical, cases or workshops during which aspects of learners' activities in the course module are assessed. (Yoleye 1984, Mihram 2011 and Amedeker 2016).

Definition:

Nwigwe CC et al viewed Continuous Assessment as *a* method of finding out what a pupil has gained from learning activities in terms of knowledge, character development and industry. They defined it as a system whereby the final grading of a pupil in knowledge, character and industry takes into account in a systematic way, all his performances during a given period of schooling, such that the final grade becomes a crystallization of his whole course endeavours and performances.

Domains of Continuous Assessment

After teaching, learning outcomes in terms of understanding and reasoning attitudes, interests, thinking, feelings, belief, skills and all aspects of character development and change in behavior are assessed. All these cover the areas of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains which the teacher needs to assess on regular basis. (Federal Ministry of Education, 1985)

Cognitive Domain

In this area, the learner should be able to know, understand, apply, analyse and reason in the different subjects as are done in school. Cognitive domain has six important areas, namely: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis/ Synthesis and Judgment.

Knowledge is ability to recall or remember: The teacher assesses his learner, making him to recall what was taught, for mere knowledge by asking such question starting with Define, List, Name, Mention, Underline etc.

Comprehension: This requires understanding "which goes a step further. It requires interpretation, to put into words other than those used by the teacher. Such questions with: Explain; Report, Describe, Review, etc show understanding of what was taught.

Application: This means making use of what you know in a new situation. The learner understood the principles and applies the knowledge to work out a problem. Action words for Application include: Use, Illustrate, Demonstrate etc.

Analysis: This is to break up the material and examine it carefully: This level of cognition is employed when the learner is asked to Compare and Contrast two things, Criticize, Examine, Differentiate, Inspect, etc.

Synthesis: It is putting together, building up, to assemble pieces of information to form a coordinated whole. Operational words here include: Draw, Design, Arrange, Plan, Assemble, Collect, Construct, Set Up, etc.

Judgment/Evaluation: This is the highest level of cognition as it includes all other five because, before you judge, you must know the facts, understand them and be able to compare, accept and reject some, consider -them individually and put them together before arriving at a decision. Operative words are: Assess, Appraise, Estimate, Judge, Select, Choose, etc.

B. Affective Domain:

This domain makes use of variables like appreciation, attitudes, values, beliefs, interests, commitment, initiative, leadership, etc. Appreciation manifests when the learner shows awareness of beautiful surroundings, painting, arrangement of things, good behavior, good performance by others, etc. Attitude is demonstrated in manner of behavior; arrogant, look down on people or have no regards for others. Belief relates to such areas as determination on "whatever will be will be". Assessment in the Affective Domain is usually by Questionnaires, Interviews, Observations and Sociometric Measures.

C. Psychomotor Domain:

The psychomotor domain is concerned with the skills which students possess naturally or by development. This includes body movements, manipulation of limbs, etc. as in drawing/hand writing, fixing equipment, playing musical instruments dancing, gymnastics/ swimming etc./ doing all skillfully.

In some school subjects, cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of assessment appear to be in separately connected. The three areas can exist in one subject while it is also

possible for one domain to exist without others. E.g., Biology, Geography, Technical Drawing and the like cannot be properly studied unless the student can draw and explain the item.

Purposes of Continuous Assessment

1. Continuous Assessment which is for diagnostic purposes in education is crucial for students because it enforces good study habits, minimize examination malpractice and greater reliability of assessment.
2. Students may not do his best at one examination alone therefore cannot be rightly taken to be a genius or a dunce from the result of one examination.
3. Performance at one examination alone can be affected by many factors beyond the students' control.
4. Regular assessment reveals more about students' perseverance, determination/ creativity, character, etc. or lack of such other acceptable social behaviour associated with schooling.
5. All performances in different assessment instrument throughout the course of study will count towards the student's final grading which reflects his totality instead of result of one performance.

Characteristics of Continuous Assessment

Based on various definitions of continuous assessment by different scholars like: Amedeker (2016), Eimann (2010), Evans (2013) and Iyajere (2022), the characteristics common to them include the following: -

1. **Systematic:** Continuous assessment is made and recorded at a predetermined interval; with the teacher knowing what he is assessing and being familiar with the assessment instrument.
2. **Comprehensive:** The cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains are all assessed with different instruments such as Tests, Assignments, Projects, Interviews, Observations, Questionnaire etc.
3. **Cumulative:** Every recorded activity contributes towards the final grading.
4. **Guidance:** Oriented: It helps Counselors and Principals to advise students on their future career, based on the information in the student's records.
5. **Diagnostic:** The teacher uses continuous assessment to find strength and ' weaknesses of the students and also in the line of instruction.

Continuous Assessment Techniques

In schools, assessment of learning outcomes has been largely based on written tests. Yet there are certain qualities that cannot easily be measured with written tests, for instance, sense of values or beliefs are the affective domain that require other instrument of assessment other than tests, thus various

techniques of Continuous Assessment include the following: Tests, Assignments, Projects, Observation, Questionnaire, Interviews, Sociometric and Rating Scales. (Hassan et al 2022 and Mihram 2011)

A. Tests

School Tests

School Test can be defined as any behavior sample which is characterized by the fact that it is standardized in terms of administration, evaluation and performance output. Standardization means that all aspects of the test instrument such as; time, manner, response/ evaluation, methods and scoring are the same.

Types of Tests

Aptitude Test: This type of test refers to a combination of abilities and characteristics, whether innate or acquired, that are indicative of an individual's ability to learn or develop proficiency in some particular area, if appropriate education or training is provided. It measures both ability and previous learning in order to predict future performance usually in a specific field. It takes into consideration other motivational factors/ interests and other characteristics which are conducive to acquire proficiency in the specific field. Aptitude test can come by a way of testing a job applicant's ability to think clearly, solve problems and answer questions, showing if he has the right skill for a specific job. Different forms of aptitude test include; Numerical reasoning, verbal reasoning mental ability or intelligent test. In the school system, it is a test accessing readiness for learning.

Achievement Test: It is a test that measures the extent to which a person has achieved or acquired certain information or master certain skills usually as a result of planned instruction or training. It is a test of developed skill or knowledge.

Standardized Test: It is a carefully constructed test by an expert with uniformity of procedures in scoring, administration and interpreting the test results. It measures students' level of achievement in various contents and skill areas by comparing their test performance with the performance of other students in some general reference group. Uniform methods of administering and scoring have been developed and scored with high degree of objectivity.

4. Teacher Made Test: This is a test constructed locally by the teacher to assess students' achievement level. It is usually based on the instructional material or programmes to which the students have been exposed to. An example is a classroom test.

Broad Divisions of Test

The two broad divisions of test are Essay and Objective Test.

A. Essay Test:

Essay test is where the student is allowed to present his answer in any way he feels, to any length he can and the marker is free to accept what he feels is correct depending on the examiner's knowledge and disposition. Essay test is easy to set and difficult to mark. Essay test is subjective; subject to the markers' way of looking at the fact. The marking heavily depends on the marker. Types of Essay Questions begin with

What, Who, Describe, Discuss, Compare, Contrast, Develop, Outline, Summarize, Evaluate, Explain, etc. To ensure reliability in Essay test, it is necessary to prepare a detailed marking guide to set out what to look for point by point, and how many marks to each point.

B. Objective Test:

This is a test which has only one correct answer which does not depend on examiner's mode. Anybody who can read and write can mark an objective test. The student does not present his answer in any way he likes. He must choose from a mixture of the correct answers. Objective test is difficult to set but easy to mark. The difficulty lies on the fact that the examiner tries to;

- a. Make each answer look correct and at same time, leave only one correct answer.
- b. Avoid two possible answers to an item.
- c. Avoid revealing the correct choice by the way the choice is written.
- d. Avoid use of meaningless options like: 'none of the above, all of the above, often or any plausible response.

Types of Objective Questions:

There are two
major types
of objective
question:

1. Fixed
Response
Questions

2. Free Response Questions

1. Fixed Response Questions:

This provides all the choices that the student must decide among, e.g. Yes or No, True/False, Right or Wrong. The principal limitation to this item is that it gives room for guessing. There is 50-50 chance of guessing the correct answer, even if the student has no knowledge of what the question is about. This situation has necessitated the use of correction formula for guessing and this is the final score. Thus:

$R = \text{No that is Right}$

$W = \text{No that is Wrong}$ S -

$R - W = \text{Final Score}$

i.e., if a student gets 8 right answers and 4 wrong, the total score is $8 - 4 = 4$. Fixed response item only tests knowledge of facts and principles. It is not suitable for assessing statements of opinion and understanding.

Advantage is that it is likely to improve student's relevant clues to correct responses. The disadvantage is that if not carefully constructed, it can be time consuming and inefficient.

i. Matching item: This is another kind of fixed response item where the student is to match the element in one column

with those of another. It is suitable for learning ability to associate two things such as dates, events, places, persons etc.

ii. **Multiple Choice Items:** This kind of fixed response item presents more responses in which only one is the desired response. The student selects the correct answer from several given options of four or more alternatives. Those answers not correct are detractors and they are equally attractive to students who don't know the answer.

The major merit of multiple choices item includes:

- a. It requires the examines to discriminate among alternatives.
- b. It removes subjectivity in scoring.
- c. It can measure the degree of understanding of abstract concepts.
- d. It is less of ambiguity and misinterpretation.

2. Free Response Questions:

This appears as an incomplete statement in form of phrase or short answer questions. They appear as completion items.

Completion Item: This is a statement in which the student is expected to fill in the appropriate phrase or word that is omitted. Unless they are prepared with extra care, they are likely to measure rote learning rather than real understanding. An example of completion item type is: The capital of Anambra State is ____.

Constructing Tests for Assessment:

The four major considerations in constructing tests for assessment are:

Objectives: They are what you want the students to achieve; what they are expected to do and how they are expected to behave. The objectives help the teacher to know what and where to test. The teacher should ensure that the test covers the three main areas of objectives namely: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Objectives have to be clearly stated/ defined and must be in the students' desired performance behavior.

Content: The teacher must know the contents of those topics expected to be taught to the students. He must test what he taught and all of what he taught putting into consideration, the weight of each of the topics in relation to the whole content, so as to have content validity.

Table of Specification or Test Blue Print: It is a 2-dimensional table that shows how many questions you want to set and what kind of test item you are to set: Essay or objective. The questions must touch all of the areas. E.g., If you want to set 50 objective questions and you have only 3 topics, the weight of each of the topics are specified as follows:

Cours e Biolog y	C on te nt	Knowledg	Comprehe	Applicatio	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation	total
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Total 100%	Plants 30%	Differences in living things 50%	Characteristic s of Living things 20%
	Topic 3	Topic 2	Topic1
12	4	5	3
12	2	8	2
10	5	3	2
6	2	3	1
5	1	3	1
5	1	3	1
50	15	2	1

Reasons for preparing Table of specification before setting test questions include:

- a. It serves as a guide in selecting your test items.
 - b. It ensures that the test will finally have content validity thereby reflecting the importance attached to each of the topic.
 - c. It makes distribution of questions easy.
- 4. Writing the item:** There are a number of considerations in writing the test items:
- a. You have to write more items than you will eventually use.
 - b. Question should be as precise as possible, avoiding long statement.

- c. Specify the degree of accuracy required for full credit.
E.g., in not more than 3 pages.
- d. Avoid clues that can lead to getting the answer even when the student does not know, or giving clues to one item in the statement of another item.
- e. Try not the students fails the answer just because they do not understand the questions.
- f. Never use double negative e.g., "one of these is not uncommon in continuous assessment records".

Organizing and Administration of Tests:

1. First of all, review the items to remove or correct those that have technical or typographical errors,
2. **Assemble the items in sections according to types:** subject matters, outcome being measured, etc.; although not all that important.
3. **Give instructions:** The instruction must be simple and clear. Tell how and where to begin a fresh number, time allowed, credits for any extra response or penalties. E.g., "credit will be won by precise and clear answers, while wrong spelling will earn penalties". "Answer one or two out of the five".
4. **Maintain security** of question papers so as to test everybody equally.

The Guiding Principles in conducting tests/exams:

1. There are certain things to be done to ensure that students have equal chance and time to responses;
2. The exam hall is void of distraction of any kind.
3. Exam Hall should be psychologically conducive, well ventilated, lighted and spacious.
4. Each candidate must have separate question paper and adequate materials.
5. Teacher must take supervision very seriously/ be highly involved.

Guidelines helpful in conducting test/exam:

1. Students and the examiner should arrive in the hall well before the time. They should have stopped reading by the time.
2. Where necessary/ read what constitute exam malpractice before time/ but do not harass or waste their time unnecessary.
3. Give them time to read the instruction and ask them to start.
5. Avoid interrupting the examinees unnecessarily.
6. Go straight to any person who commits offense.

7. Make general corrections or directives only and avoid going close to individual examinee.

Scoring of Test

1. Scoring of objective test items: The most common way of scoring objective test is manual scoring which is very difficult. Another is the machine scoring by the use of computer. It is easy.

2. Scoring of Essay Test: Many ways here include:

a. Point method: This involves detailed scheme of the subject. Here the teacher expects you to mention number of ways and each of them carries points.

b. General Impression Method: Here the teacher reads the writer's composition/ use of English/ how he constructed the essay/ etc. then assigns mark to them. In this case/ it is advised to arrange the papers according to the best ones before assigning marks. Don't just assign marks after reading one before going to another.

Letter Grading

This is a situation where a group of scores are put together and given one letter grade to cover all scores within the range. This system makes it convenient to record marks. Example of grading system is shown on the table below:

Percentage score	Letter Grade	Point	Rating
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70-100	A	5	Excellent
60-69	B	4	Very good
50-59	C	3	Good
45-49	D	2	Fair
0-44	E	0	Fail

Source: Federal Ministry of Education (1985)

One major limitation of this grading system is that it is difficult to compare between or across groups.

B. Assignments

Assignment is a task given to students to complete in a short period of time. In this case; the purpose of assigning the task must be defined and it must be educative.

Advantages of Assignment include that;

1. The teacher can provide the students with the opportunity for directing their own study.
2. It reduces the amount of work done in class, therefore creates more room for other activities.
3. It helps the teacher engage her students with meaningful activities. Examples of Assignments to be worked at home and submit in the next one or two days include: what is test? What is the different between objective and essay test? etc.

C. Projects

Projects are large scale exercises, occupying much longer time than Assignment. Some can last for months/ a whole semester or more. Instead of stuffing the heads of the pupils with information, the teacher can turn some of the learning activities into a project which a group of students can work on and submit. Any learning gotten through project can hardly be forgotten. The project will force students to search for facts from different sources. E.g., To collect information about marriage practices in their respective villages, etc.

D. Observation

The effective domain of educational objective which include such variables as beliefs, interests, attitudes, emotions, honesty, punctuality, etc. that cannot be easily quantified and measured are assessed through questionnaire or interviews and the information gotten from them are confirmed through observation. Observing students in and outside classroom in different activities gives more reliability therefore helps the teacher confirm or reject information supplied by his students. Other behaviors that can be assessed by observation include: aggression, tolerance, initiative, courage, kindness, nearness, honesty, class attendance, attitude to work, self-control, etc.

Procedures for Achieving a Reliable Observation:

1. The teacher should determine in advance, what behaviour he is to observe and then give assignment or projects of where such behaviour are likely to be exhibited to a group of students. For example, to measure leadership qualities, the teacher should determine what activities are clues to leadership.
2. The teacher should know what behaviors of the students show leadership qualities and set up a task for the group, without appointing a leader to observe which of them will take initiative to organize and pursue the task to a successful end, and which of them takes responsibility for reporting back to him.
3. The teacher may do his observation under a natural situation or create and manipulate a situation that may include the behaviour for the purpose of checking the behaviour.

4. The teacher should determine when and how to carry out the assignment or project or activity by which the behaviour is to be detected and then observe the students as many occasions as possible before arriving at a conclusion. Observation must be regular.
5. The teacher should keep regular record of his observations in terms of occasions, dates and when such behaviour occurred, as the basis for making an assessment of the individual's character.

E. Check List

This is a prepared list of statements relating to behaviour traits. Students are asked to check and tick (✓) to any of the statement that applies to him. Check list wants to know whether or not the characteristic is present. For example: Check (✓) against any of those statements which applies to you:

- I like to read my books often.
- I take my meal before any other thing.
- Most of the household work is done by my siblings.
- My mother leaves me to do what I like.

The teacher evaluates answers to the above statements and assesses the student who responds in the affirmative to all items.

F. Rating Scale

A rating scale wants the students to put in order of preference or magnitude/ the qualities presented before him. It asks how much or how little a characteristic is. In this assessment technique/ much depends on the teacher. The teacher should therefore avoid preconceived ideas about the student or what he heard about the student's family.

G. Sociometric Technique

This is a method of discovering student's acceptability or rejection by his peers. It depicts a pattern of social relationship in a group. For example, each member of a class is asked to nominate whom he would like to do certain things with. When they have made their choices, the teacher computes the results and find out who is most favoured in the group of that particular activity. The type of activity determines the groupings. Students are likely to choose different persons for different activities. For instance, the person one chooses as a leader for socials may not pass as a leader for a Debate. Sociometric helps the teacher to discover the isolated members of the class in specified activities and can call the attention of the Counselor where necessary.

Continuous Assessment Records

Record keeping is an important aspect of continuous assessment. Continuous Assessment record is a practice of keeping records of student's achievements and development, as they are scored and graded.

Reasons for Record-keeping and Reporting include that at each stage in school, one can easily determine whether or not the student is making progress in cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domains. Moreover, from well-kept records, parents can accept the counselor's advice about their child's ability to carry on with higher education and in what direction. Record keeping also facilitates, continuity of assessment in the case of change of school. Performance in previous schools helps the new teachers know where to place the student and what areas in the educational development they have to pay more attention to. (McEwan, 2021 and Cari 2020)

Characteristics of Good Record:

1. Records should be regular.
2. It should cover every aspect of development and not only about things taught, but also character and skills.
3. Record should be cumulative, covers overall assessment till end of the session.
4. Records should be easily understood and clearly explained.
5. It should be easily accessible in files, stacked alphabetical.
6. Records should be confidential and last for a long time.

Types of Continuous Assessment Records

A. Cumulative Record

Cumulative Record is a permanent record of a student which is kept up to date by the school. It is student's educational

history with information about his school achievements, attendance/ health, test scores and other similar pertinent data. It is the record of all students' activities; all he does in the school from the day he entered into school up to any particular point in time. Cumulative Record is described as a method for recording, filing and using information essential for guidance of students. It consists of all data considered important enough about students, collected and recorded in some organized way for safe keeping from year to year. It is prepared by the teacher in school, to enable guidance workers offer required guidance services to the student, for his development and growth.

Contents of Cumulative Record include:

Personal of individual, Home and Community, Academic, School Attendance, Health and Extra Curricular Activities

Types of cumulative records: includes the card type, the booklet type and the folder type

Characteristics of Cumulative Record includes:

1. It is a complete record covering past and present educational achievement.
2. It is a comprehensive record.
3. It is a continuous record starting from entrance to the end of school education.
4. It is an up-to-date record maintained by teachers.

5. It invites data about students which should be valid, reliable, authentic, objective, usable and pertinent in nature.
6. It is confidential and not open for all.

Cumulative Records is useful to Guidance counselors for comprehensive picture about students, to school heads to ascertain students' performance and to parents to provide deficiencies that lie in the child.

C. Anecdotal Record

According to Bates et al (2019) is a record of teacher's regular observation of meaningful incidences and events in the life of his student. It is a record of what has become peculiar of a particular student or a marked deviation from a normal way of behavior of a given student. That is to say that there are kinds of things you must note about your student. Any deviation from student's normal behavior is worth of note because there may be need for it later on. Sometimes, a student may demonstrate an exceptional behavior such as: answering some questions which others could not doing something that is sticking: good or bad. The teacher needs to remark such behaviors, put it down carefully in the student's record with the dates when such events occurred/ shortly after it happened. Anecdotal record is restricted to only those behaviours that cannot be evaluated by any other means. The teacher records the event without the student's knowledge of it.

A sample of Anecdotal Record card is show below:

Anecdotal Record

Name	
Class	
Date	
Incident	
Place	

C. Progress Report

This is a reporting system that provides an insight into student's attained results in various school activities. It is a record which contains a periodical report of assessment of progress made in the class. In this report, the teacher keeps the record of student's achievement in the class tests, assignments, homework, projects, including assessments in the affective and psychomotor areas. It provides a snapshot about how a student is performing in key units of work. It basically includes the grades and other academic details of the student. It is designed to give regular update on student's performances in academic achievements, efforts and behaviours. From the

progress report, the teacher transfers the cumulative reports to the student's Cumulative Record Card/Folder/Book.

D. Diary

This is a detailed scheme of work broken up into units of instruction showing how much of the syllabus will be covered within a given period. Diary of daily record of work contains record of actual work done each day and the learning experiences to which the students were exposed.

E. Psychological Record

What is Psychological Testing?

Psychological Testing is a standardized measure of a sample behavior. It is a means of discovering whether an individual has an ability aptitude, trait or character for which he is purported to possess. It is a means of gaining information about other individuals. The main objective of psychological testing is to measure individual differences or behaviours of the same individual on different occasions. Thus, in education, psychological testing is for the purpose of classifying students according to their abilities in order to discover who among them is intellectually retarded, who are the gifted children and who among them requires remedial programmes or special education.

This is why it is important to maintain psychological record to enable the guidance workers have, in their possession, a sound knowledge of the student's individual characteristics and a comprehensive information about them in order to

make crucial decisions regarding their academic growth and development.

Functions of Psychological Record:

1. To classify students according to their abilities so that every one of them will make maximum benefit of all school instructions.
2. To identify intellectually retarded students and the gifted ones.
3. To identify the probable causes of students for academic performance.
4. To provide meaningful point of reference for effective educational and vocational counseling for students.
5. To provide concrete evidence for selection of students for professional and other special duties.
6. To help students understand themselves in terms of strength and weakness and to enhance their personal development.
7. To provide basis of making objective report to parents concerning their children's ability, aptitude and overall performance in school.
8. To serve as a concrete data for determining which student goes into vocational, technical or Academic Education.

9. To provide concrete basis of making objective referee reports of students when demanded by other agencies.

Conclusion: -

Proper Continuous Assessment is quite comprehensive. Teachers are encouraged to use a wide range assessment technique that are appropriate to the learning activities of the students, in order to fulfill the primary objective of teaching and learning.

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