Implementation of Continuous Assessment System at Elementary School Level: A Follow Up Study

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Abstract

Achieving UPE is a dream for Pakistan because of different reasons from one is students drop out. This drop out is because of two reasons the learning gaps and learning difficulties. To overcome this, Continuous Assessment System (CAS) was introduced at elementary schools; which was continued for one year and then was shifted to summative assessment. To identify the reasons; this study was conducted. The objectives of the study were to: investigate district-wise and gender-wise difference in opinion of teachers and students about the implementation of CAS, identify the strength and weakness of CAS, find out methods used for students' assessment and investigate reasons of discontinuing CAS at schools. Population was all the teachers and their students working in elementary schools of district Attock and Chakwal. Random sampling technique was used for sample selection. Likert scale and semi open-ended questions were used to collect data from teachers and students. Collected data were analyzed by t-test, frequency and percentages. Findings showed significant difference exists in the opinion of teachers and students. The teachers from Chakwal have positive attitude in implementing CAS similarly male teacher were more inclined to implement CAS. Further students from Chakwal district have more awareness about CAS as compared to students from Attock district and female students have broader view about implementation of CAS in schools. Teachers reported different reasons for liking CAS. CAS was discontinued because of non-cooperative behavior of parent and careless attitude of students towards their studies. Keeping in view the findings it is recommended that CAS may be continued with some modification.

Keywords: students' assessment, continuous assessment, elementary schools

Introduction

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It provides the base for further decisions related to students. Unfortunately, Pakistan is still lacking to achieve universal primary education (UPE) because of different reasons (khan & Niazi, 2016). The reasons described (Farooq, 2006; Michubu, 2012; Adam, Adom & Bediako, 2016) are student's dropout and their learning disabilities (Vaughn & Thompson, 2003; Bair, 2014). Both the reasons have roots in assessment at school. In Pakistan formative assessment has not been given any weightage and decision of students' learning is based on final examination, which is unfortunately do not judge real

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competencies or performance of students. This is because Pakistani educational system encourages those who can reproduce what they have learnt and fails those who are unable to do that (Khan, 2010). The learning disabilities which are not been addressed during classroom activities leads to dropout or ended on failure in final examination which again become a reason of dropout.

Keeping in view the situation continuous assessment system (CAS) was introduced in Punjab Province of Pakistan. The special features of this assessment system were; assessment during six weeks, parent teacher collaboration, result of assessment send to home, suggest remedies and cater students learning problems identified. Every student was supposed to be assessed on prescribed standards. Their written reports were prepared, record of student's weekly performance and scores on written test were being maintained by teachers.　　At the end of annual year all the students were promoted to next class with supposition that students have fulfill all the requirements during continuous assessment (CA) by teachers.

All the teachers teaching to elementary classes were trained by specially prepared manuals and practical activities were conducted to equip the teachers. This study has been designed to investigate the issues and challenges faced by teachers and students during implementation of CAS in schools.

Objectives of the study
Following were the objectives of the study:
1. To investigate the teachers opinion about implementation of CAS in schools
2. To find out the teachers opinion about the strengths of CAS
3. To indicate the reasons of discontinuing the CAS in school
4. To assess the awareness of students about the implementation of CAS
5. To highlight the methods of assessment used to assess student's performance under CAS
6. To find out the benefits for continuing CAS for student's

Hypothesis of the study
1. District-wise teachers' opinion don't significantly differ about the implementation of CAS in classroom
2. Gender-wise teachers' opinion don't significantly differ about the implementation of CAS in classroom

Literature Review
Continuous assessment (CA) of students learning and performance systematically assessed during given period of time (Byabato, Kisamo, 2014). The concept of CA becomes increasingly

important for individuals, teachers, administrators and policy makers because of its effectiveness. One of the basic reasons of dropout is students don't have basic competencies and they moved forward on minimum performance level which created gaps in knowledge and promote learning difficulties. When these learning difficulties are not been addressed it become learning disability, and students fail to continue and leave the school (Taylor & MacKenney, 2008).

CA provides ground to teachers for identify learning difficulties and make proper strategies. The main features of implemented CAS were: students can be assessed at any time during six weeks and different tasks can be suggested according to their space and pace of learning. Abejehu, (2016) described that CA act as powerful instrument for enhancing the attainment of learning outcomes to ensure quality education and academic excellence in the educational institution. The already conducted research studies supported CA based on the evidence that students who are assessed continuously obtain better results than those of equal ability assessed through a single examination (Nneji, Fatade, Awofala, & Awofala, 2012; Mwebaza, 2010; Faleye & Adefisoye, 2016).

Characteristics of Continuous Assessment System (CAS)

Four basic characteristics of CA have been described in literature (Okoroma 2004; Yoloye, 2009). These characteristics are the CA should be systematic, comprehensive, and cumulative and guidance oriented. The designed CA program possessed all four characteristics.

The systematic nature means every assessment activity is clearly articulated and has space in school plan (Getinet Seifu, 2016). The CAS was systematic and record was kept in portfolios. It was comprehensive as it was related to overall development of students and it assesses all aspects of students' learning and monitors the aspects of expected performance areas of students (Okoroma, 2004). It further emphasis teachers should not narrow the assessment activities to paper pencil test only (Faleye & Adefisoye, 2016; Faleye & Afolabi, 2007). The under considerations CAS was comprehensive in nature and cover all the aspects of students' academic life.

The cumulative nature of CA demands that every student undergo the same number of assessment sessions till the end of year. It entails that every students learning and performance continually assessed and feedback should be given (Abejehu, 2016). The annual reports of the portfolio are the evidence that CAS is cumulative in nature. The guidance oriented nature of CA means it has to identify strength and weaknesses and provide feedback after every assessment activity. The said CAS has no backward direction as the teachers has to guide, give feedback, provide needful and push students' forward to at least minimum level. No failure no repeater will sit in the class.

This study has been designed to evaluate the reasons why it was not been implemented successfully? What were the issues and challenges to teachers and students?

Research Methodology

The study was quantitative in nature and survey was used to collect data. The population of the study was 1570 teachers and 15420 students. According Gay (2005) 120 teachers and 600 students were selected. The teachers and students were divided in to two strata's i.e. male and female in each district. The sample was selected in two phases. In first phase teachers were selected in second phase students of each teacher were randomly selected. 5 students of each teacher were included in study. Multistage Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample. The detail of sample is presented in table 1.

Table 1. The distribution of sample in to strata's

| District | Teachers | | Total | Students | | Total |
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Attock	30	30	60	150	150	300
Chakwal	30	30	60	150	150	300
Total	60	60	120	300	300	600

Two instruments one for teachers and one for students were used to collect data. Teacher instrument was comprised upon 2 parts. One was rating scale and second was semi open ended questions. The rating scales comprised on 16 statements, rated on 5 point Likert scale ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The maximum score could be 80 and minimum could be 16 on rating scale. The actual mean was 32. If teachers obtained mean score is greater than 32 it shows teachers have positive opinion about the phenomenon and vice versa. The 2 semi open ended questions has 4 options each, teachers were allowed to select more than one if they think it is relevant. Frequency and percentages were used to analyze these eight options of open ended questions. Similarly the student instrument was based on similar indicators. It contains 14 statements rated on 3 point rating scale and three semi open ended questions with 4 options each. The maximum score on students rating scale could be 42 and minimum score could be 14, in this way the actual mean score was 14. It means if the obtained mean score is above 14 than students having positive opinion about the assessment system implemented and vice versa. For semi open ended questions students were allowed to select more than one option if they think it is relevant to them. Students' responses on semi

open ended questions were also analyzed by frequency and percentages.

Both the instruments were validated by experts (assessment & language), teacher educators and teachers. Instruments were pilot tested in 4 schools (2 from each districts). Cronbach alpha was used to find the reliability of the statements on instruments. The reliability value was 0.78 for teacher instrument and 0.71 for student instrument.

Analysis of data collected from Teachers

Table 2: District wise comparison between mean scores about implementing Continuous Assessment System

District	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P
Attock	60	44.00	7.85	118	4.34*	0.032
Chakwal	60	50.00	7.58			

*   Significant at 0.05

The t-values in table show significant difference in the teacher's opinion about implementation of Continuous Assessment System in classroom. The actual mean score was 32 and obtained mean was 44 and 50 which is higher than actual mean score. It shows teachers have positive attitude towards implementing CAS in classroom. The mean score of teachers from Chakwal district is higher as compared to mean score of teachers from Attock. It means teachers from Chakwal district showed positive attitude about implementing CAS in classroom as compared to teachers from Attock district.

Table 3: Gender wise comparison between mean scores about implementing Continuous Assessment System

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	P
Female	60	48.00	8.40	118	1.30	0.58
Male	60	49.83	7.31			

The t-value indicated no significant difference exists in teacher's opinion about implementation of Continuous Assessment System in classroom. Although the male teachers mean score is higher than female teachers but it is not significant. It only indicated male teachers face fewer problems in implementing CAS in classroom.

Table 4: Strength of Continuous Assessment System according to teachers

Options	Attock	Chakwal	Total

	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Character building of students	7	11.66	11	18.33	18	15
Students weaknesses can be identified and solved	23	38.33	39	65	62	51.66
Students can be guided in right direction at proper time	12	20	14	23.33	26	21.66
Every student can get an opportunity	11	18.33	20	33.33	31	25.83

According to table 38% teachers from Attock were of the opinion that Continuous Assessment System is good as student's weakness can be properly identified and solved and this number is double (65%) in Chakwal. It verifies findings of table 3 that teachers from Chakwal have more awareness about Continuous Assessment System. Maximum 18% teachers were of the opinion that character building of students takes place. This is very trivial as in summative assessment only cognitive domain remains the focus of teachers since long so in one year is not enough to bring the change.

Table 5: Reasons for discontinuing the Continuous Assessment System

	Attock		Chakwal		Total	
Options	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Teachers are over burdened	9	15	16	26.66	25	20.83
Every student can't be assessed because of short time	12	20	11	18.33	23	19.66
Students became careless on automatic promotion	47	78.33	45	75	92	76.16
Non-cooperative behavior of parent increase workload	20	33.33	9	15	39	32.50

From the four given reasons for discontinuing the Continuous Assessment System, the most important according to teachers was student's automatic promotion. Above 75% teachers thought this system may be discontinue because students become careless and do not focus on studies. The second reason was non cooperative behavior of parent in Attock district and teachers' burden was in Chakwal district.

Analysis of data collected from Students

Table 6: District wise comparison between mean scores on implementing Continuous Assessment System

District	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p
Attock	300	22.49	8.66	598	2.03*	0.040
Chakwal	300	23.25	7.79			

*   Significant at 0.05

The t-value indicates significant difference exists in opinion between the students of both the districts. On the basis of mean score it can be said students from district Chakwal have more awareness about implementation of Continuous Assessment System in schools.

Table 7: Gender wise comparison between mean scores on implementing Continuous Assessment System

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p
Female	300	24.12	5.72	598	5.52*	0.038
Male	300	22.12	10.75			

*   Significant at 0.05

The values in table 7 are contrary to the values of table 3 where male students have positive attitude towards implementation of Continuous Assessment System in schools. The student's opinion is reversed female students showed positive attitude towards the implementation of Continuous Assessment System in schools as compared to male students.

Table 8: Students awareness about CA Program

Options	Attock		Chakwal		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Result sent to home after every 6 weeks	65	21.33	127	42.33	192	32.00
No one detained everyone promoted	147	49	56	18.66	203	33.83
Test has no choice	142	47.33	73	24.33	215	35.83
It solves the problems of all students	44	14.66	40	13.33	84	14.00

Table values express student's awareness about Continuous Assessment System implementation. They have accepted the new system as they feel happy their result sent to their home they are promoted to next class without fear of failure. They are even happy if the test has no choice and they have to cover whole content.

Table 9: Methods used for students' assessment

Options	Attock		Chakwal		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Observation	25	8.33	42	14	67	11.16
Question answer	222	74	197	65.6	419	69.83
Activity	61	20.33	61	20.3	122	20.00

Question answer method of assessment was used by teachers for the assessment of students. Some teachers use activity method too. But observations are not been used by the teachers of both districts.

Table 10: Why Continuous Assessment System should be continued

Options	Attock		Chakwal		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Students come to know about his success immediately	70	23.33	121	40.33	191	31.70
Students difficulties can be solved in time	75	25	106	35.33	181	30.16
Students problems other than studies can also be solved	16	5.33	10	3.33	26	4.30
The portion of content learned once need no revision	151	50.33	53	17.33	204	34.00

The CAS is importance according to students because they don't need to revise whole content again once they are assessed they move on no repetition no revision is required. Along with it want CAS need to be continued as they got immediate feedback on their learning and their difficulties can be solved on time.

Discussion and recommendations

Continuous Assessment System is one of the most effective mechanisms for the enhancement of students' academic achievement. The study results revealed in table no 4 that it enable the teachers to identify the weakness of students which intern enable the teachers to work on those gray areas of students learning. The same were revealed by the study of Taylor and MacKenney (2008) whose results indicated that CAS pinpoints students' learning difficulties which enable the parents and teachers to devise an appropriate plan of action and to work in collaboration to come up with solution and enhance the learning attainments of students.

Further, the results reflected that Continuous Assessment System enables the teachers to guide the students and give immediate feedback. This result was supported by Okoroma (2004) and Yoloye

(2009) who were agreed that the nature of CAS is guided oriented and there must be guidance for students to develop their skills and enhance their knowledge of the desired area. Similarly, table no 8 reflected that most of the students were well aware of CAS which shows the proper implementation and positive effects on the academic performances of students.

The results of table no 5 indicates that the major reason of discontinuing CAS was that students became careless as they were promoted to the next grade. But the studies of Faleye & Adefisoye (2016), Mwebaza (2010), Nneji, Fatade, Awofala, and Awofala (2012) revealed that CAS has the power to enhance students' learning outcomes, so how CAS in Pakistan makes the students careless towards studies. These results are not aligned with the international studies. The actual reason behind this may be teachers burden and the overcrowded classrooms at Pakistan which doesn't allow the CAS to implement properly. Furthermore, parents' none-cooperative behavior was another important element for discontinuing CAS. The education of students' parents is as important as students and teachers are. The non-cooperation of one stakeholder affects the performances of the other and therefore, this may the most important among all indicators for the discontinuity of CAS.

Likewise, the methods of assessment used for CAS were included observations, question answers and activities and majority were of the view that question answers was the most frequently used method of assessment which was followed by assessment activities. However, the results of the study of Faleye and Afolabi (2007), Faleye and Adefisoye (2016) revealed that the use of alternative assessment methods are effective than paper pencil test. Further, question answer method also doesn't yield the desired results and it may be a reason for the failure of the CAS at Pakistan.

Based on the results and discussions it was recommended that CAS may be re-continued as it enables the teachers and students to work on the learning gaps of students and enhance students educational attainments. It was also recommended that awareness campaigns through social, printed and electronic media for parents regarding their role in their children education may be launched so that parents may be responsible to perform the secret responsibilities in coordination with teachers.

Further, it was recommended for teachers that they may apt more alternative assessment methods while assessing students learning outcomes. It is also pertinent to mention that District Educational Management of the concerned districts may arrange workshops for teachers in alternative assessment methods so that they could adopt more authentic assessment tools.

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