

PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN COLLEGES OF TEACHERS' EDUCATION IN THE WEST OROMIA REGION, ETHIOPIA

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The main purpose of this study was to investigate the practices and challenges of continuous assessment in colleges of teachers' education in the western Oromia region. For this study, the researchers selected three colleges teachers' education, purposely based on job experience. The researchers selected Nekemte, Dembi Dollo and Shambo colleges teachers' education from well, medium, lower experienced respectively. Descriptive survey design involving both qualitative and quantitative approaches was employed. 134 student-teachers and 178 college teachers were selected and participated in the study. The quantitative data was collected through the questionnaire and observation checklist and analyzed using frequency and percentage, whereas, the qualitative data interview and document analysis were analyzed using narrative form and interpretative way. The finding of the study revealed that the extent of practicing continuous assessment in class is low. The study also showed that teachers have positive perception toward continuous assessment and they accepted continuous assessment as important to improve the achievement of learners. The finding disclosed that a large class size, shortage of time, teachers' work load, low interest of students, large instructional content, and lack of commitment among teachers as the major factors are hindering the practice of continuous assessment in colleges of teachers' education. The researchers recommend that educational authorities and stockholders should make effort to a manageable number of students' per class, College administrators should allow teachers to cover the minimum workload than over loading above the standard, set for college of teachers' education

Keywords: Continuous Assessment, College Students, College Teachers' Education, Evaluation, Standardized testing

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1. Introduction

Since the endorsement of 1994 Ethiopian education and training policy, different teacher training models have been introduced to improve the quantity and quality of teachers that, in turn, brings the quality of education as a whole. The impetus of teaching and teaching profession is to bring up and shaping generations in the world of profession, impacting the nation development. In line with this argument Ethiopian education and training policy of 1994 article 3.4 with sub-articles 4.3.1; 3.4.3 & 3.4.5 and article 3.6 sub-article 3.6.2 states about teacher and teacher education, respectively, as:

– Ascertain that teacher trainees have the ability, diligence, professional interest, and physical and mental fitness, appropriate for the profession.

– Teacher education and training components will emphasize basic knowledge and professional code of ethics,

– A professional career structure will be developed in respect to the professional development of teachers.

– The participation of teachers and researchers in getting the necessary field experience in various development and service institutions and professionals of such institutions in teaching will be facilitated [1].

According to the education and training policy of Ethiopia [1], the efforts, designed to make teachers and teaching profession at the highest ladder tip, was well

articulated in the policy document. According to the teacher training policy document, continuous assessment is the pillar of the teacher training policy to translate the notion of active learning methods into practice that realize the potential of students and the quality of education at all levels. To achieve effective education in one country, continuous assessment is important. Assessment is one of elements of the instructional process that plays an important role to improve learning in educational institutions.

As stated in Educational and Training Police [2], the practical task of implementing the new curriculum at the school level requires continuous assessment as part of the curriculum in general and the instructional process in particular. To understand this, the role of teachers is of paramount importance. In other words, teachers should be well informed about the concept and procedures of practicing continuous assessment before they implement it. In relation to this, [3–5] suggested that teachers' knowledge and attitude should be considered for the effective practice of the assessment program. The educational progress of learners needs frequent assessment. The various aspects of learning activities of learners should be assessed by various methods. The traditional assessment method mainly focuses on testing which encourages superficial learning, but did not assess the wider skills of pupils. Thus, continuous assessment should be essential to measure learners' performance in a holistic

manner. As the researchers are college teachers they observed from their experience that there were problems, related using varieties of continuous assessment techniques in college.

Continuous assessment is a typical classroom based strategy which provides regular information about the teaching-learning process. Concerning this, [6, 7] suggested that continuous assessment is practiced on a day to day basis to judge the quality of the individual's work or performance. Employing continuous assessment enables a teacher to assess more of the intended behavior of students and to take note of factors, such as their active participation, how articulate they are, their relationships with others and their motivation that have a high educational relevance [8, 9]. Continuous assessment is a student evaluation system that operates at a classroom level and is integrated with the instructional process.

So far, many researchers conducted different studies on the problem in different ways. For instance, [10] conducted the study on assessment of the implementation of continuous assessment and found that the majority of teachers on continuous assessment practices were not well understood, the objectives behind the important of continuous assessment were not clear to most teachers. Yet few who were aware did not practice, and a field work and project were not commonly applied. These are other reasons that initiated the researchers to undertake the study. Therefore, the main aim of this study was to investigate the practices and challenges of continuous assessment in colleges of teachers' education in the western Oromia region, Ethiopia. The specific objectives of the study were

- To identify the perception of teachers toward continuous assessment in Colleges of Teachers' Education in the West Oromia region.

- To find out the extent of the teachers' continuous assessment practice in Colleges of Teachers' Education in the West Oromia region.

- To identify the major factors that influences the practice of continuous assessment in Colleges of Teachers' Education in the West Oromia region.

2. The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Many scholars wrote about the definition of assessment in different ways. Regarding this, [11] state that the term assessment "may be used in education to refer to any procedure or activity that is designed to collect information about the knowledge, attitudes, or skills of a learner or a group of learners". They also stated that "assessment is a process of obtaining information that is used to make an educational decision about students, to give feedback to the students about his or her progress, strengths and weakness or to judge instructional effectiveness and circular adequacy and to inform the policy". Again according to [3, 12-14], assessment is any act of interpreting information about students' performance, collected through any of multitude of means or practice. It is the procedure, through which information about pupils is obtained by any method or procedure that is formally or informally.

Assessment is broader than testing and measurement, because it includes all kind of ways to sample and

observe students' skills (psychomotor domain), knowledge (cognitive domain), values and emotions (affective domain). People often equate assessment with tests, measurement and evaluation [15]. Assessment, however, is quite different in concept. According to [16-18], measurement involves the assigning of members to represent the amount of something, possessed by an objective event or system. Students are doing in terms of specific objectives. Tests are used for summative evaluation. Tests are embedded in the curriculum materials, provided they match the specified learning outcomes. Tests, the teacher creates, are aligned with the learning outcomes. Teachers can use a test to help students using assessment procedures as teaching tools. Often, a test can be used for controlling students' behavior and communicating achievement expectations from a student [19, 20].

2.1 Assessment Paradigms

The growing current literatures identify four assessment paradigms of class room assessment that can be used in conjunction with each other: assessment for learning, assessment as learning, assessment of learning and assessment in learning [21].

Assessment for Learning: is an ongoing, diagnostic and school based process that uses a variety of assessment tools to assess learner's performances [22]. It reflects a view of learning, in which assessment helps students learn better, rather than just achieve a better mark, involves formal and informal assessment activities as part of learning and to inform the planning of future learning, includes clear goals for the learning activity, provides the effective feedback that motivates a learner and can lead to improvement, reflects a belief that all students can improve, encourages self-assessment and peer assessment as part of the regular classroom routines, involves teachers, students and parents reflecting on evidences, and is inclusive for all learners.

Assessment as Learning: occurs when students are their own assessors. Students monitor their own learning, ask questions and use a range of strategies to decide what they know and can do, and how to use assessment information for new learning. Assessment as learning: encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning, requires students to ask questions about their learning, involves teachers and students creating learning goals to encourage growth and development, provides ways for students to use formal and informal feedback and self-assessment to help them understand the next steps in learning and encourage peer assessment, self-assessment and reflection.

Assessment of Learning: assists teachers in using evidences of students' learning to assess achievements against outcomes and standards. In this assessment paradigm, the teacher directedness is paramount and the student one has little involvement. Sometimes referred to as 'summative assessment', it usually occurs at defined key points during a teaching work or at the end of a unit, term or semester, and may be used to rank or grade students. The effectiveness of assessment of learning for grading or ranking purposes depends on the validity, reliability and weighting, placed on any one task. This implies that there are teachers, who design learning and collecting

evidences to decide what has been learnt and what has not particularly at the end of instruction.

Assessment in learning: it places question at the center of teaching and learning. It deflects teaching from its focus on a 'correct answer' to the focus on a 'fertile question'. Through inquiry, students engage in processes that generate feedback of their learning, which come from multiple sources and activities [23, 24]. It contributes to construction of other learning activities, lines of enquiry and generations of other questions. Students are at center of learning, monitor, assess, and reflect on learning and initiate demonstration of learning (to self and others).

Besides, teacher plays a role as coach and mentor in this model. Moreover, teachers and students need to understand the purpose of each assessment strategy, so that the overall assessment 'package', being used by learners and teachers, accurately capture and use meaningful learning information to generate deep learning and understanding.

2.2 Assessment Methods

The Portfolio Assessment: it must be more than just a collection of student work to give a full picture of what a learner has achieved [25]. It has also stated, that portfolio based assessment is an important means of individualized, student-centered evaluation. Portfolio assessment has the potential to improve the complex task of student assessment [26]. More specifically, portfolios are essentially different from other forms of assessment in that they make it possible to document the unfolding process of teaching and learning over time. In relation to this [6] stated portfolios as a collaborative assessment, partly determined by a classroom teacher and partly by a learner. As [18] pointed out, portfolio assessment is a new trend to make authentic assessment pertaining to students' performance or product in classrooms.

Self-assessment: Given the chance, students can assess themselves quite accurately, – stated by [27]. Supporting this idea, [25] suggested that self-appraisal exercises are likely to increase the motivation of learners. Thus, self-assessment has the strong impact on active learning to the extent of realization that students have the ultimate responsibility of their own learning. It can help students to pinpoint their strength and weaknesses and find ways of improvement [28].

Peer Assessment: Students are encouraged to assess each other's learning and understanding, taking responsibility for supporting their classmates and making progress together. In light of this, [25] put the idea of peer assessment as a response in some form to other learners' work. It can be given by a group or an individual and it can take any of a variety of assessment techniques.

Projects: can be given individually or in groups to encourage students to become active and independent learners. Whether projects are used early or late in the course, the time that is needed must be time, tabled for students as well as for teachers [29]. They further stated that projects encourage students to work together and reflect their work. Furthermore, [30] asserted that projects are important to show the attitude, skills, knowledge

and the learning process of students as they engage in activities.

Interviews and Conferences: Teacher-student interviews or conferences are productive means of assessing individual achievements and needs. It is stated, that during discussions, teachers can discover students' perceptions of their own processes and products of learning [30]. According to [31], interviewing is one of the best ways to find out how much children have learned and how well they understand what they have learned. Conferences can be used more widely as part of the assessment and may take the form of discussion between teachers and students about schoolwork [32]. As [32]; and [31] pointed out, interviews and conferences are truly authentic ways of obtaining information about learners' achievements and their thinking. To attain this, open-ended and partially structured questions can be used.

Quizzes, Tests and Examinations: are parts of the traditional mode of assessment. They are most often used for assessing students' knowledge of content; nevertheless, they may be used for assessing processes skills and attitudes [33]. According to [34], quizzes, tests and examinations are used as assessment mechanisms in combination with alternative methods of assessment these days. This shows that paper and pencil tests and alternative methods of assessment complement each other. This enables a teacher to have detailed, valid and reliable information about students and the teaching learning process. Most often, quizzes and tests are part of the continuous assessment and examinations are part of the summative assessment.

Continuous Assessment: is a more formative means of assessing learners that gives an opportunity for them to improve their performance. It is used as a process of gathering and integrating information about learners' shifting from a judgmental role to a developmental role [25]. Continuous Assessment is carried out at periodic intervals for the purpose of improving the overall performances of learners and of the teaching/learning process [35].

Defined continuous assessment as a mechanism which shows the full range of sources and makes teachers to gather, interpret and synthesize information about learners [16]. Continuous assessment of the learners' progress could be defined as a mechanism whereby the final grading of learners in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning systematically takes account of all their performances during a given period of schooling.

Other definitions [16, 36] describe continuous assessment as an assessment approach which should depict the full range of sources and methods, teachers use to gather, interpret and synthesize information about learners; information that is used to help teachers understand their learners, plan and monitor instruction and establish a viable classroom culture. From these definitions, one could infer that continuous assessment is an assessment approach which involves the use of a variety of assessment instruments, assessing various components of learning, not only the thinking processes but including behaviors, personality traits and manual dexterity. Continuous assessment will also take place over a period of time. Such an

approach would be more holistic, representing a learner in his/her entirety. It will begin with decisions that teachers perform on the first day of school and end with decisions that teachers and administrators make on learners, regarding end-of-year grading and promotion.

3. The Research Method

The design of this study was a descriptive survey involving both qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods. This method is preferred at it helps the researchers to investigate the current practices and challenges about the issue under study. Further, the use of applying qualitative and quantitative methods simultane-

ously is to complement the weakness of one method by the other method.

3.1 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted in three colleges of Teachers' education in the West Oromia Region of Ethiopia, namely: Dambidollo, Shambo and Nekemte colleges of teachers' education, respectively. The sampling includes the graduating class of student -teachers, teachers with ample experiences, vice-deans and deans of colleges of teachers' education. Table 1 shows the summary of sampling stratifications and sampling techniques from populations of the sampled colleges of teachers' education.

Table 1

Total population, sample size and sampling technique					
S/N	Sample CTE	Population Name	Population	Sample	Sampling Technique
1	Dambi Dollo CTE	Regular student- teachers	1605	482	Systematic random
		Teachers	61	61	Census
		Dean and vice dean	2	2	Census
2	Shambo CTE	Regular Student-teachers	1026	308	Systematic random
		Teachers	43	43	Census
		Dean and vice dean	2	2	Census
3	Nekemte CTE	Regular Student-teachers	2000	601	Systematic random
		Teachers	74	74	Census
		Dean and vice dean	2	2	Census
Total			4815	1575	

Key: CTE represents college teachers' education

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

For this study, different data collection instruments: questionnaire, interview, classrooms observation and document review were employed.

Questionnaire: Many scholars wrote about the importance of questionnaire to collect information from respondents. [37] states that "questionnaire is a form, used in survey design that participants in a study complete and return to the researchers." It is means of eliciting beliefs and practices of individuals on the issue under study. In this study, questionnaire was the main instrument to collect data from teachers and student-teachers.

Interviews: Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used which allows for further probing of respondents' answers [34]. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews may provide the researchers with the flexibility to explore more deeply about the practices and challenges on continuous assessment and the perception of teachers' educators as to wards of continuous assessment at the colleges. Therefore, to get additional information and strengthen the data, obtained via questionnaires, the researchers prepared the semi-structured interview of 5 items. The interview was held with deans and vice-deans from each college, regarding the perception of teachers, practices and challenges of continuous assessment at the colleges.

Classroom observation : Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place. There are

many situations, in which observation is the most appropriate strategy of data collection. Observation helps researchers to get the real behavior rather than elicit reports of preference or intended behavior in the form of self-report data [37, 38]. The researchers used this tool to see how teachers practice continuous assessment in their classrooms. This enables the researchers to triangulate the response of a study participant with the real practices of continuous assessment.

3.3 Data Analysis

The document analysis started from the inception of the review on Ethiopian education and training policies and practices. The primary focus was on recent documents, updated or originating on the Ethiopian teacher training system, focusing on continuous assessment and the present practices and the significant changes or shifts in the teacher training reform. The initial document analysis provided a base understanding of the factors, driving changes in continuous assessment. All the collected data of using questionnaires and observation checklist were organized and categorized to quantify numerically. Data, generated from the document review, interview and questionnaire, were schematized, while data, generated from FGDs, were narrated. Finally the data from the three colleges of teachers' education were triangulated against the policy documents to draw lessons. Final researchers' experiences led to draw the conclusion of the study and policy implications for future actions.

4. Research Results and Discussions

4.1 Presentation of the findings

As illustrated on Table 2, concerning the sex of teachers participants, about 170 (95.5 %) of them were males, whilst 8(4.6 %) were female teachers, participated in the study. As the data of teachers shows that, there was the low proportion of female teachers in colleges of teachers’ education, which contradicts with the Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program V (ESDP-V 2016–2020). Furthermore Table 2 por-

trayed that teachers’ service years were as follows: 61 (34.3 %) of teachers were between the service year range of 16–20 and 40 (22.5 %) of them were between the experience range of 21–25 year. As well as, the remaining participants, 40 (22.5 %), 14 (7.9 %), 12 (6.7 %) and 1 (0.6 %) of teachers participants were between the range of 15–15, 6–10, >25 and 1–5 years of experiences respectively. This implies that the majority of the participants have rich experiences of teaching and learning activity.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Teachers-respondents by their Sex, age and service year

Participants	Sex	Age							Service year						Total	
		16–20	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	41–45	46–50	5–Jan	10–Jun	15–Nov	15–20	21–25	>25		
Teachers	Male	F	–	–	6	15	74	57	18	–	12	37	61	48	12	170
		%	–	–	3.4	8.4	42	32	10	–	6.7	21	34	27	67	95.5
	Female	F	–	1	2	1	3	1	–	1	2	3	–	2	–	8
		%	–	0.6	1.1	0.6	1.7	0.6	–	0.6	1.1	1.7	–	–	0.6	4.6
Total			–	1	8	16	77	58	18	1	14	40	61	50	12	178

Regarding a teachers’ load per week, majority 153 (86 %) of teachers had less than 15 period and 13(7.3 %) of participants had between 15–20 periods and the rest of participants had between 21–25 periods and above 25 periods per week respectively. This indicates that the majority of college teachers have no overload period per week in their regular class. Concerning the educational background of teachers, 28 (15.73 %) teachers are first degree holders and 139 (78.08 %) of teachers are Master’s Degree holders. The rest only 11 (6.17 %) of them were diploma holders. This clearly shows that the most of teachers in the colleges are Master’s Degree holders with respect to the educational status and requirement to undertake their activities, relevant to the job, offered at this level.

participants, about 395(28.3 %), and 228 (16 %) were range between 21–25 and 16–20 respectively. This shows that the majority of student–teachers participants were between 21–25 years. Therefore, the age statistics implies that the colleges’ student-teachers are dominated by the younger level.

Table 3

Teachers’ work load, education level and class size

Item	Period	f	%
Teachers’ load per week	less than 15 per week	153	86
	15–20 per week	13	7.3
	21–25 per week	6	3.4
	more than 25 per week	6	3.4
	Total	178	100
Educational qualification	Diploma	11	6.17
	First Degree	28	15.7
	Master’s degree	139	78.1
	Total	178	100
Class size (class–student ratio)	30–39 students	2	1.1
	40–59 students	162	91
	60–79 students	14	7.9
	Total	178	100

Note: f – frequency

Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, the student/ class size reveals that majority 162 (91 %) of the teacher participants opined that about 40–59 students follow their education in a class while the rest 14 (7.9 %) and 2 (1.1 %) of them opined about 60–79 and 30–39 students learn in a class respectively.

As Table 4 shows, the proportion of student-teachers’ sex was almost a balance since 706 (50.7 %) and 685(49.7) were males and females respectively. As Table 4 indicated, the age group of the student–teachers

Table 4

Characteristics of the students-respondents by their sex and age

Participants	Sex	Age				Total	
		16–20	21–25	26–30	31–35		
Students	Male	F	228	395	62	21	706
		%	16	28.3	4.5	1.5	50.7
	Female	F	291	384	–	10	685
		%	21	28	–	0.7	49.7
Total			519	779	62	31	1391

As indicated in Table 5, Item 1, about 8 (4.5 %) and 15 (8.4 %) of teachers were interrogated daily and every two or three with the frequently practicing of continuous assessment in their instruction. On the other hand, about 67 (33.7 %) and 60 (15.7 %) of teacher par-

ticipants responded once in a semester and twice in a semester with the frequently practicing continuous assessment in their instructions. Beside this questionnaire, the response of the interviewed college vice-dean was given as follows:

“In our college there is the beginning on practice of continuous assessment, but it is not this much satisfactory because, there are students who has no interest when they are assessed by continuous assessment. Especially, our college students did not like to do assignments and home works. The commitment of our college teachers is also low and there is overlook between our teachers. Due to this I can generalize that currently in our college the technique was not effectively practiced and it needs more effort and works.” (Vice-dean W, Date, 02/03/2019)

One of the vice-deans in the college also expressed the response of above as follows:

In our college the practice of continuous assessment is more or less on a good condition and many of our college teachers practice it. But when I say in good condition, I do not mean that there is no limitation on practice of it. Because, there is a degree of variation between our college teachers on dedicating to practice the program and there are factors that hinder them to fully practice continuous assessment. The actual practices of continuous assessment by our teachers were; tests, quiz, oral question, individual and group assignment, the most commonly used assessment methods at the end of each unit (Vice-dean E, Date, 08/03/2019).

Table 5

Teachers' Practice of Continuous Assessment in Teaching Learning Activities

Items	5		4		3		2		1		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Frequent practicing of continuous assessment	8	4.5	15	8.4	28	15.7	60	33.7	67	37.6	178	100
How frequently do you use classwork in the actual teaching process	9	5.1	21	11.8	65	36.5	31	17.4	52	29.2	178	100
How frequently do you use oral questions in your class	59	33.1	67	37.6	33	18.5	10	5.6	9	5.1	178	100
How often do you use class activity in your class	11	6.2	22	12.4	41	23	53	29.8	51	28.7	178	100
How frequently do you give assignment to your students	50	28	58	32.6	48	27	22	12.4	0	0	178	100
How often do you use tests	53	29.6	62	34.8	35	19.7	13	7.3	15	8.4	178	100
How frequently do you use exams	51	28.7	59	33.1	43	24.2	25	14	0	0	178	100

Note: 5 – Daily, 4 – every 2/3 days, 3 – every week, 2 – Twice in a semester, 1 – Once in a semester, F – Frequency, % – Percentage

As indicated in Table 5, Item 2 above, about 9 (5.1 %), 21(11.8 %) and 65 (36.5 %) of the participants responded daily, every 2/3 days and every week about the frequency of using class work activity respectively and about 31 (17.4 %) and 52 (29.2 %) of participants responded twice in a semester and once in a semester with frequently using class work activity in their classes.

As Table 5 item 3 shows, about 9 (5.1 %), 10 (5.6 %) and 33 (18.5 %) of the participants responded once in a semester, twice a semester and every week with frequently using an oral question in their sessions and about 57 (33.1 %) and 67(37.6 %) of the participants responded daily and every 2/3 days with frequently using an oral question in their sessions to increase the student-teachers' participation and improve their learning. In the same way in above Table 5, item 4 above, about 11 (6.2 %), 22 (12.4 %) and 41 (23 %) of the participants responded as daily, every 2/3 days and every week with frequently use of class activity in their sessions and about 53 (29.8 %) and 51(28.7 %) of the participants responded once in a semester and twice in a semester with the frequently use of class activity in their sessions to increase the student-teachers' participation and improve their learning.

As Table 5 item 5 shows, about 22 (12.4 %) and 48 (27 %) of teachers responded twice in a semester and every week with frequently giving assignments to their students and the rest about 58 (32.6 %) and 50 (28 %) of participants responded as every 2/3 days and daily with

frequently giving assignment to their students in their schools. Table 5 item 6 reveals, about 13 (7.3 %), 15 (8.4 %) and 35 (19.7 %) of the participants responded twice in a semester, once in a semester and every week with frequently using tests to measure the students' learning performance respectively and the rest about 62 (34.8 %) and 53 (29.6 %) of the participants responded every 2/3 days and daily with frequently using tests to measure the students' learning performance. Similarly to this idea, one of the college deans also expressed the response and pointed out that:

“Our teachers did not encourage student-teachers to participate during teaching and learning and they teach them without giving chance for students and they run fast to cover the portion only and our teacher gave tests and assignment many times, especially this year our teacher was giving at least one tests per three week and one assignment per a month. During this year our teachers used different assessment such as assignment, quizzes, written tests and others instead of using single mid examination.” (Vice-dean M, Date 05/03/2019)

From these participants it is possible to deduce that even if college teachers use different assessment techniques, there was somewhat limitation by the teachers on using different assessment techniques to measure

the students' achievement. This means, since continuous assessment involves the use of great values of modes of evaluation for the purpose of guiding and improving the learning and performance of students, the teachers are required to use different mode effectively for the benefit of the learners.

As indicated in Table 5, most of the college teachers use an oral question, assignment, test and exam as the most frequently used assessment technique. Therefore, from this one can infer that most of the College teachers make use of limited continuous assessment techniques rather than finding alternative methods to reach all the students. Supporting this, Brown, Bull, and Pendlebury (1997) advised that if essays are used as the only form of assessment, students' writing may improve, but other skills may remain undeveloped. In the same way, NOE (2004) explained that evaluation of students' acquisition of knowledge and skills is an integral part of the teaching learning processes and continuous assess-

ment is an assessment approach that involves the use of a variety of assessment instruments to assess various components of learning.

As Table 6 describes responses by student-teachers on the extent of continuous assessment, practiced by their teachers in class teaching, accordingly, item 1 describes about 239 (17.2 %), 197 (14.2 %) and 83 (5.9 %) of the participants, responded 2-3 day, once in a semester and daily with the frequency of teachers' giving a class work, while the rest 498 (35.8 %) and 374 (26.9 %) of student-teachers responded as every week and twice in a semester with the frequency of teachers' conducting a class work in their colleges.

As above Table 6 item 2 shows, about 176 (12.7 %) and 73 (5.2 %) of participants agree weekly and 2-3 day with teachers' frequently giving a practical activity for their students and the rest about 685 (49.3 %) and 457 (32.8 %) of them responded as once in a semester and twice in a semester respectively with the idea.

Table 6

Student-teachers' practice of Continuous Assessment in Teaching-Learning Activities

Items	5		4		3		2		1		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
How frequently do your teachers give you class work in your class	83	5.9	239	17.2	498	35.8	374	26.9	197	14.2	1391	100
How frequently do your teachers give you practical activities	–	–	73	5.2	176	12.7	457	32.8	685	49.3	1391	100
How frequently do your teachers give you a home work	145	10.5	323	21	601	43.3	249	17.9	73	5.2	1391	100
How frequently do your teachers ask you an oral question in the class	–	–	93	6.7	997	71.6	260	18.7	41	3	1391	100
How frequently do your teacher observe your work	197	14.2	280	20.1	426	30.6	332	23.9	156	11.2	1391	100
How frequently do your teacher assess your performance with a project work	–	–	176	12.7	270	19.4	426	30.6	519	37.3	1391	100

Note: 5 – Daily, 4 – every two or three days, 3 – every week, 2 – Twice in a semester, 1 – Once in a semester, F – Frequency, % – Percentage

As shown in Table 6 item 3, about 249 (17.9 %), 145 (10.5 %) and 73(5.2 %) of student-teachers participants agree twice a semester, daily and once in a semester with how frequently teachers give a home work for students to strengthen their knowledge from their class and the rest 601(43.3 %) and 323 (21 %) of student-teachers participants opined as every week and 2-3 day with how frequently teachers give a home work for students. In same Table 6, item 4, about 41 (3 %) and 93 (6.7 %) of students responded once in a semester and every 2/3 days with how frequent teachers ask their students an oral question and the rest 997 (71.6 %) and 260 (18.7 %) of student-teachers responded every week and once in a semester with how frequent teachers ask their students an oral question to see and examine their understanding about the topic of their learning.

As indicated in Table 6 item 5, about 280 (20.1 %), 197 (14.2 %), and 156 (11.2 %) of participants responded 2-3 day, daily and once a semester with how frequent teachers observe the work of their students in the class respectively and the rest 426 (30.6 %) and 332 (23.9 %) of participants responded every week and twice a semes-

ter with how frequent teachers observe the work of their students in the class. Same Table 6 item 6 indicated that about 270 (19.4 %) and 176 (11.9 %) of student-teachers responded as every week and 2-3 day with how frequently teachers assess the student-teachers' performance by giving a project work and the rest 519 (37.3 %) and 426 (30.6 %) of student-teachers responded twice a semester and once a semester with how frequently teachers assess the student-teachers' performance by giving a project work.

One of the vice-deans in the college E also confirmed the response of students and said that:

“Our teachers did not encourage students to participate during teaching and learning and they teach without giving chance for students and they run fast to cover the portion only. Again our teachers do not identify the level of students and the measures of students by preparing questions which we are not learned in the class.”(Date 01/04/2014).

As the result of an analysis shows, the majority of student-teachers confirmed that their teachers are not

fully practicing the continuous assessment activities. From this one can infer that the majority of teachers use similar assessment techniques.

Regarding continuous assessment, the mark list was properly analyzed and important notes were taken from three colleges of Teachers Education' in 2011/2018/9 academic year and 36 achievement record sheets were investigated. The mark lists of continuous assessment contain the variety of assessment techniques as individual assignment, group assignment, quiz, test, mid exam and final exam. According to Table 7, a teacher used only few places of mark lists to fill a students' mark. Table 7 depicts that a quiz, test, exam and assignments are used as continuous assessment techniques in colleges of teachers' education. The document review was made to validate

or identify the consistency of the questionnaire with the actual teachers' practice, given for the subject, included in the study.

Finally, the researchers observed that most of the assessment formats were not appropriate to record every activity of the learners. Because, the space, given to the assessment format, was more convenient to record terminal assessments i.e.: test, quiz, mid exam and final exam than different types of assessment. From this one can conclude that the majority of teachers use similar assessment techniques and they have basic skill of recording and documenting students' continuous assessment achievements. The actual practices of continuous assessment by teachers: quiz, test, exam, individual and group assignment were the most commonly used assessment methods.

Table 7

Issues, analyzed in the student mark list format

Issues analyzed	Responses		Remarks
	Yes	No	
Is there an observation in the mark list format as a tool		×	None exist
Is there a presentation in the mark list format as a tool		×	None exist
Is there an assignment in the mark list format as a tool	√		Exist
Is there a project work in the mark list format as a tool		×	None exist
Is there a laboratory work in the mark list format as a tool		×	None exist
Is there a test in the mark list format as a tool	√		Exist
Is there are quizzes in the mark list format as a tool	√		Exist
Is there an exam in the mark list format as a tool	√		Exist

Table 8

Teacher's Perception towards Problems of Continuous Assessment Practices

Items	SA		A		UD		D		SD		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Class size	63	35.4	55	30.9	16	9	34	19	10	5.6	178	100
Teachers negative attitude on CA	15	8.4	6	3.4	19	10.7	83	46.6	55	30.9	178	100
Shortage of time	22	12.4	109	61.2	31	17.4	4	2.2	12	6.7	178	100
Lack of awareness/knowledge	2	1.1	13	7.3	81	45.5	49	27.5	13	7.3	178	100
Shortage of teaching materials	11	6.2	31	17.4	51	28.7	71	39.9	14	7.9	178	100
Teachers' workload	51	28.7	77	43.3	17	9.6	2	1.1	31	17.4	178	100
Low interest of students	48	27	52	29.2	27	15.17	25	14	26	14.6	178	100
large instructional content	33	18.5	74	41.6	53	29.8	6	3.4	12	6.7	178	100
lack of commitment among teachers	42	23.5	48	26.9	34	19.1	30	16.8	24	13.5	178	100

Note: SA – strongly agree, A – Agree, UD – Undecided, D – Disagree, SD – strongly disagree, f – Frequency, % – Percentage

The data in Table 8 depicts MAJOR FACTORS, influencing the practice of continuous assessment in colleges of teachers' education.

Class size: to express deliberately how large class size affects the practice of continuous assessment, about 63 (35.4 %) and 55 (30.9 %) of the teachers opined as strongly agree and agree with the class size problem. Related to this idea, one of the college vice-deans said as follow:

“It is very difficult to manage more than 50 students in a single class and come up with an effective practice of continuous assessment. Had there been less number of students, it would have been manageable for continuous assessment to be fully practiced.”
(Dean E, Date, 08/03/2019)

In connection with this idea, [34] contended that the problem of large class size is very serious to assess the student's class work and homework. Similarly, – [7, 39] indicated that a large class size is the most limiting problem that affects the implementation of continuous assessment.

Shortage of time: Table 8 indicates that about 109(61.2 %) and 22(12.4 %) of participants opined as agree and strongly agree on time constraint as a continuous assessment practice.

Regarding to this, one of the interviewed vice-deans points out:

“Teachers are offering many different courses per semester. Furthermore, they are expected to complete the course, from which they are assigned, to offer according to the

schedule, given to them by the office of the registrar. In addition to this, they are doing practicum part I up to IV and they are correct practicum portfolio and take reflection. This makes them busy.” (Vice-dean W, Date, 02/03/2019).

Interest of students: As could be observed from above, the majority of participants had the perception that time was one of the constraints; Table 8 item 8 indicated about 48(26.96 %) and 52 (29.21 %) of teacher respondents, opined as strongly agree and agree with the low interest of students as a problem, affecting the practice of continuous assessment. The College Dean had the following to say, regarding the low interest of students:

Most student-teachers are not familiar with the newly developed continuous assessment program. They were accustomed to taking mid, final and national entrance exams, when they were at secondary school. Hence, here at the college level, when teachers tell them that they had finished their evaluation out of sixty per cent in the classroom, they complain their dissatisfaction and even sometimes they were seen to be shocked by the information from the teacher (Dean M, Date, 05/03/2019).

The majority of respondents accepted that the low readiness of students influenced teachers not to fully practice continuous assessment as effectively as possible.

Teachers’ work load: Table 8 item 6 indicated that about 17 (9.6 %) of them also responded as undecided about the teachers’ work load as a problem, affecting the continuous assessment practice in their colleges respectively and about 77 (43.3 %) and 51(28.7 %) of the teachers confirmed that agree and strongly agree with the teachers’ work load as a problem, affecting the practice of continuous assessment in their classes. In line with this, one of the interviewed college deans pointed out:

“Our teachers are offering many different courses per semester. Most of our college teachers teach more than four courses, especially, Education stream and language stream have a load of different courses. In addition to this teachers are doing practicum, involving in different committees, teaching night and weekend program. Therefore, they run in shortage of time to practice continuous assessment successfully. As a result, it is easy to imagine how challenging them each course through continuous assessments is.” (Dean W, Date, 15/03/2019)

Large instructional content: Table 8 item 8 indicated about 33 (18.5 %) and 74 (41.6 %) of teacher participants, opined as strongly agree and agree with the large instructional content as a problem, affecting the practice of continuous assessment. Regarding to this, one of the interviewed vice-deans pointed out:

“The credit hour given and subject content is mismatched in many courses and teachers are not covering the portion of lesson on time. For this reason teachers are run for

cover of portion rather than practice continuous assessment.” (Vice dean M, Date, 04/03/2019)

In line with these facts the most commonly mentioned challenge to implement continuous assessment is insufficient time allocation for the course.

Lack of commitment among teachers: According to Table 8, about 48(29.96 %) and 42 (23.59 %) of participants very claim as agree and strongly agree with the lack of commitment among teachers as a problem, affecting the continuous assessment practice in their learning activities.

In line with this, one of the college vice-deans said as follow:

“Currently the criteria for promotion, transfer and training are not clear for many of teachers. Someone can be given a better position because of friendship or long years of teaching experience, while there are teachers who have shown a high level of efficiency and performance in teaching. This makes them less committed.” (V W, Date, 02/03/2019)

It can be concluded, that a class size, shortage of time, interest of students, teachers’ work load, large instructional content and lack of commitment among teachers are the major factors that influence the practice of continuous assessment in a college of teachers’ education.

As revealed in Table 9, the majority of participants 345 (24.6 %) and 570 (41 %) participants responded as agree and strongly agree with the class size problem. Table 9 item 3 indicated that about 249 (17.9 %) and 654 (47 %) of student-teachers responded as agree and strongly agree that the time constraint is one of problem impacts of the continuous assessment practice. In the same manner, about 353 (25.4 %) and 405 (29.1 %) of student-teachers responded as agree and strongly agree with the teachers’ work load as a problem, affecting the practice of continuous assessment in their classes.

Accordingly, most of the student-teachers confirmed that a class/students size, shortage of time, and heavy work load were identified as a major problem, affecting the practice of continuous assessment in their colleges.

A college vice-dean had the following to say regarding the challenges of continuous assessment:

“The teachers have the necessary skills of recording and documenting students’ continuous assessment achievements. But the main problem is large numbers of students in the class, shortage of time, high loads of many courses and low interests of students, which are an obstacle to practice continuous assessment properly.” (Vice-dean E, Date, 08/03/2019).

Generally, according to the data processed, the most serious factors, affecting the practice of continuous assessment are: Class size, Shortage of time, Low readiness of students, Teachers’ work load, Large instructional content and Lack of commitment among teachers. These major factors influence the practice of continuous assessment in their learning activities

Table 9

Student-Teachers' Perception on Continuous assessment Practices

Items	5		4		3		2		1		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Class size	343	24.6	570	41	125	9.0	322	23.1	31	2.2	1391	100
Teachers attitude on CA	52	3.7	187	13.4	882	63.4	218	15.7	52	3.7	1391	100
Shortage of time	654	47	249	17.9	114	8.2	218	15.7	156	11.2	1391	100
Knowledge problem	145	10.4	21	1.5	207	14.9	436	31.3	581	41.8	1391	100
Education aid problem	197	14.2	93	6.7	561	40.3	343	24.6	197	14.2	1391	100
Problem of teachers insufficient preparation	342	24.6	125	9	52	3.7	478	34.3	394	28.4	1391	100
Heavy work load of teachers	353	25.4	405	29.1	197	14.2	208	14.9	228	16.4	1391	100
Lack of support from the collegefor	322	23.1	218	15.7	561	40.3	145	10.4	145	10.4	1391	100

Note: 5 – strongly agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Undecided, 2 – Disagree, 1 – strongly disagree, F – Frequency, % – Percentage

4.2 Discussion of Results

4.2.1 Teachers' Perception towards Continuous Assessment

The finding revealed that teachers have a positive perception and understanding about continuous assessment. The finding from this study is similar to that of [40] on the teachers' perception and practices towards continuous assessment that states that teachers have a positive perception and understanding about continuous assessment. In relation to this, [4] suggested that teachers' knowledge and attitude should be considered for the effective implementation of the assessment program. According to the response, obtained from questionnaires of teachers and interview of deans and vice-deans, most of teachers have a positive perception and understanding about continuous assessment. A new continuous assessment program can succeed only if teachers accept it. If teachers do not accept the philosophy of this program, it is clear that it is not possible to implement the program. Accordingly, [4] strengthened this idea and suggested that teachers must understand the assessment process, feel secure about it, and accept it as their own for its effective implementation.

The result, obtained from the interview of deans and vice-deans shows that teachers have a basic skill of recording and documenting students continuous assessment achievements. Most of them also accepted that teachers prefer continuous assessment than mid exams and final exams. In addition to this, most of the respondents accepted and believed that continuous assessment is necessary to increase the academic achievement of students, solve students learning problems, and continuous assessment uses a variety of assessment techniques. In line with this, [41] states that continuous assessment is a general term that includes the full range of procedures, used to gain information about students learning (observation, rating of performance, or projects, paper and pencil tests) and the formation of a value judgment, concerning the learning progress.

4.2.2 Practices of Continuous Assessment

This study also came up with findings that are consistent with other previous research findings in contrary to that of [10, 40, 42–44], indicating that there was a low practice of continuous assessment in colleges of teachers' education. In this study, the results, concerning the current practice of continuous assessment, suggest

that it is possible to deduce the hardly possible way of continuous assessment practices in a college of teachers' education. The finding, obtained from teachers and students, shows that the teachers used a few type of continuous assessment tools, such as: assignments, quizzes, tests, mid and final exams are dominating the rest. Moreover, the findings revealed that most of teachers used similar continuous assessments. In spite of this, it was found out, that assessment methods, most frequently used, were assignment, quizzes tests and final examination. These finding agree with [43], which found out that teachers do not use various assessment methods to check the pupil's mastery of the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes, but rather focus mostly on written tests and homework.

The results from the observation checklist also indicated that the majority of teachers were not familiar to use oral questions, to use a variety of continuous assessment tools, to give information about continuous assessment, encourage students to assess their own work and others' work. In addition to this, the interview and the document analysis result as well showed that teachers mostly used assignments, quizzes, tests, and exam. But, project and field works were not used as tools of assessment. In line with this [10], observed that the actual practices of continuous assessment by teachers were: exams, tests, quiz, individual and group assignment. They were the most commonly used assessment methods at the end of each unit. This finding indicates that instruments for assessing the cognitive domain were highly used by the teachers and they were most often used for assessing students' knowledge of content.

The instruments for assessing the affective and psychomotor domains were less used. This was not satisfied the definition of continuous assessment as stated by [35]. Regarding to this [45], found that the current continuous assessment system gives no attention to a project work, which is the most important learning medium that allows pupils to take active part in their own learning.

4.2.3 The Major Factors that Influence the Practices of continuous assessment

The study revealed that the major factors, affecting the practices of continuous assessment are: class size, shortage of time, interest of the students, teachers' work load, large instructional content and lack of commitment among teachers.

A class size concerns with learning to occur positively when lessons are under appropriate conditions both for a teacher and students. Similarly [34] contended that the problem of large class size is very serious to assess a student's class work and homework. Teachers, who teach many students in an overcrowded classroom, often say that it is certainly not suitable to provide activities for such classes. In line with this, [36] states that teachers commonly complain that the class-size is hampering their attempt at practicing continuous assessment and recording each and every student's performance. The study shows that there is a poor classroom condition which is not suitable to practice continuous assessment in a classroom. The data, gathered from the questionnaire and interview, shows that the numbers of students in class are large and so it is difficult to evaluate, manage, and practice continuous assessment as the intended whole.

Concerning challenges of continuous assessment, most of the respondents of teachers also accepted Class size, Shortage of time, Low interest of students, Teachers' work load, Large instructional content and Lack of commitment among teachers as the major factors that influence the practice of continuous assessment in their learning activities. In addition to this, the result of the deans' and vice-deans' interview also showed that a Class size, Shortage of time, Low interest of students, Teachers' work load, Large instructional content and Lack of commitment among teachers were the major factors, affecting the practice of continuous assessment in their colleges.

According to [46], it was observed, that teachers fail to use continuous assessment in the classroom due to the following challenges.

These are:

- a) large class size,
- b) lack of commitment,
- c) broad course content.

The successful implementation of continuous assessment demands more work time and responsibility on the part of teachers. As could be observed from the data, the participants had the perception that time was one of the constraints, which influenced them not to fully implement continuous assessment as effectively as possible. Among the factors that were identified hindering the implementation of continuous assessment is the lack of commitment by teachers. From the data, gathered from deans' and vice-deans' complaining, teachers are overloaded with many courses. As a result, teachers are expected to complete the course from which they are assigned to offer according to the schedule. This makes teachers to focus on chapter cover than use of continuous assessment.

5. Conclusions

Based on the above findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

– The continuous assessment practice at Teacher Education Colleges in the Western Oromia region of Ethiopia is ineffective and null practiced.

– The study also revealed that though college teachers exhibited the positive perception, they are unable to implement or practice continuous assessment because of the weekly workload.

– The finding disclosed that a large class size, shortage of time, teachers' work load, low interest of students, large instructional content and lack of commitment among teachers are the major factors, hindering the practice of continuous assessment in colleges of teachers' education.

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