



A Discrepancy Evaluation Approach in Determining the Cala Efficacy in Meeting the Expected Standards of Continuous Assessment in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools. A Case of Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe

*Claretah Makuvire

Department of Curriculum and Educational Management Studies, Faculty of Science Education, Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe

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*Corresponding author: [Claretah Makuvire, PhD](#)

Department of Curriculum and Educational Management Studies, Faculty of Science Education, Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe

Abstract

Measurement and evaluation are concepts and actions that must be considered at all stages of curriculum creation, implementation, and feedback. This is because they play an important role in demonstrating the strengths, weaknesses, and hurdles to any curriculum ideas, implementation process, and overall outcomes of what various stakeholders are doing. The evaluation of the curriculum instruction process consists of two phases. The first is the assessment of students (most typically in meeting the standards) which takes place before, during, and after instruction. The second is the evaluation of the effectiveness of the guides and resources, and the instructor or teacher. Evaluation helps to establish the worth of a program and make decisions on whether to continue, stop, or modify the project. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALA) in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools. A case study methodology involving in-depth interviews to five Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) trained CALA moderators for 2022 and 2023 and the five Advanced Level teachers from different schools in the province. The researcher also conducted document analysis to discover discrepancies between the specified standards and the CALAs assigned to pupils by their teachers. The data revealed a significant disparity between expected CALA practice and what is really happening in various schools. The study proposes that ZIMSEC establish rules for standardizing the setting and marking of CALAS in schools in order to reach the competency advocated for by Zimbabwe's present curriculum. This also asks for ongoing in-service training for instructors on continuous assessment and its aims.

Keywords: Continuous assessment, assessment, standardisation, evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of a Competence Based curricula in Zimbabwe in 2014 brought about a number of changes to the primary and secondary school curricula. The redesigned curriculum was intended to meet the nation's socioeconomic, cultural, and political concerns. The curriculum inherited following political independence in 1980 was perceived to be Eurocentric rather than Zimbabwean (Juet et al., 2021; Chimbunde & Kgari- Masondo, 2021). The New curricular Framework, which is being implemented by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Schools Education, was intended to address curricular imbalances and weaknesses in generating a secondary school product capable of meaningful economic contribution.

One suggested solution was to implement an evaluation that involved learners in distinctive hands-on activities relevant to pressing issues in their area. The strategy combines Continuous Assessment (CA) with centralized final national public examinations. Simply explained, CA is an assessment of a student's progress through a course of study. The previous assessment methodology only used public examinations at the end of each course. CA is a component of the

Competence-Based Curriculum, which aims to assess students' cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains through a variety of learning tasks that require them to execute, observe, and demonstrate their knowledge and skill in various subject areas. The CA evaluation in Zimbabwe occurred in accordance with the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, which calls for.

However, Continuous Assessment is not a completely new innovation in the Zimbabwean education system. Historically, it has been in practice in Vocational and Technical subjects like Food Technology, Clothing and Textile Technology, Building Studies largely borrowed from the colonial F2 education system. The new Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 has just extended it to all the other subjects with modification.

With the introduction of CA into the new curriculum, there is a whole new level of learning and assessment that has never been seen before. The form of assessment gives valuable information about the learner's progress as they complete tasks in their various learning domains. Continuous assessment gives evidence of how each learner responds to the new curriculum's requirements. The tasks assigned are used for formative as well as summative assessment. In this context, the tasks need to be designed with a lot of care and attention to ensure that the teacher end up with materials that are credible, well-structured and developed. These materials have positive outcomes for the learner in terms of motivation, concepts knowledge, problem solving skills, and how they apply what they have learned. With the same care and attention to detail, teachers need to mark the continuous assessment learning activities (CALAs) so that they remain relevant.

In order to implement this curriculum reform, it is essential to have an empowered teacher. (Carl, 2017). Without a doubt, a teacher is the most important person to implement a curriculum reform. With their knowledge of the pedagogy content, teachers are the driving force behind the curriculum reform process. However, there are still many anomalies in the administration of the CBA as the teachers are ill-prepared to implement the reform. Gama (2022); New Zimbabwe (2021). The study assesses the relevance and efficacy of the CBA in the attainment of the national objectives of the CBA to ensure the successful implementation of the CBA curriculum reform in the high schools of Zimbabwe.

Statement of the problem

Many curriculum innovations introduced in Zimbabwe since its independence in 1980 failed at implementation stage due to lack of continuous monitoring and evaluation. The innovations that come to mind are Education with Production in the early 1980s and vocationalising the secondary school curriculum and inclusive education. The same challenge has faced the CALA. Little has been done to assess the level of knowledge and commitment in the teachers as well as the reasons why they have not religiously carried out the CALAS as part of the work they are employed and paid to do. The efficiency of the curriculum innovation has faced a lot of criticism from different stakeholders. The paper was motivated by the need to carry out a discrepancy evaluation in order to expose the extent to which the continuous assessment is meeting the curriculum set standards.

Research objectives

1. To unpack the concept of continuous assessment and its standards
2. To establish the continuous assessment practice in schools
3. Come up with effective evaluation strategies for CALAS in Zimbabwe.

Review of related literature

The review of related literature consists of four sections; theoretical framework, the concept of continuous assessment, continuous assessment in Zimbabwe and lastly the standards of the Zimbabwean CALA.

Theoretical framework: Discrepancy Evaluation Model (DEM)

Andrés Steinmetz propounded the Discrepancy Evaluation Model. According to Steinmetz (1976) in order to evaluate something, we inevitably make comparisons. More specifically, we say that to evaluate a given object (whether a person, a motorcycle, or a program) it must be compared to a standard. By a standard we mean a list, description, or representation of the qualities or characteristics the program should possess. In other words, a description of how something should be is called the Standard (S). Once we are clear about how things should be, we can proceed to find out whether they actually are that way. When we are engaged in finding out the actual characteristics of the object to be evaluated, we are taking Performance measures (P). Thus, evaluation is a matter of comparing S against P. There is another term involved in the comparison between S and P. We say that the comparison yields Discrepancy (D) information, and thus we can speak of evaluation as being a matter of making judgments about the worth or adequacy of a program based upon D information between S and P. The concepts of S, P, and D surface quite naturally whenever, under the name of evaluation, one wants to judge the adequacy or worth of something. The S, P and D concepts can be shown to underlie the making of any judgment of adequacy or worth. More than that, they seem to underlie any

cybernetic process and much of human behaviour. In the case of the current study, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) guiding policy on CALA is the S, what the teachers are implementing in the schools represent P and what the research intends to find out is the difference between S & P which is termed D.

The concept of continuous assessment

The underlying concept in the continuous assessment discourse is the term assessment. Dikli (2003) defines assessment as day-to-day activities that show the students abilities to grapple with the central challenges of a discipline in real life contexts. Alufohai & Akinlosotu, (2016) further defines continuous assessment as the procedure usually undertaken by a teacher to find out whether learning has taken place and the extent to which the set educational behavioral objectives attained.

Rana and Zubair (2019) understand continuous assessment as the collection of information and observations about students periodically to find out what they know, understand and can do. Another important and exhaustive definition is by Okonkwo (2002) who sees continuous assessment as a method of evaluation in which learners' achievement in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains from the moment they become learners until the end of it and are determined using their gradual performance throughout the course. The above definitions show that continuous assessment has become the alternative mode of evaluating students' learning abilities and outcomes. It is, therefore, a mechanism whereby the final grading of the learners cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning; systematically takes account of all their performances during a given period of schooling.

Continuous assessment is a low stake assessment opposed to the concept of a once off assessment in form of an examination at the end of a course Bjaelde et al., (2017). Advocates for continuous assessment support it because of its four characteristics which are being systematic, comprehensive, cumulative and guidance-oriented in nature.

Firstly, continuous assessment is systematic in the sense that the teacher specifies well in advance what should be assessed, the time of assessment as well as the types of assessment tools. All these point at the need for the teachers to be well equipped with requisite skills which enables them to produce a programme of assessment for the learners. This is an advantage to the student this takes away fear, anxiety, trepidation and intimidation associated with terminal examinations.

Secondly, continuous assessment is comprehensive. It assesses every aspect of the learner's activities. It is not limited to cognition or academic skills only. It embraces the affective and psychomotor activities of the learner. In addition, in making continuous assessment, it uses a variety of instruments like tests and non-test techniques, assignments, examinations, interviews, socio-gram, rating scales and even the student notes (Akorokah, 2011). This aspect makes CA inclusive as it embraces students from all the skills areas unlike the centrally developed terminal examination that is focus on cognitive domain only.

Thirdly, Alufohai & Akinlosotu (2016) describes CA as cumulative in the sense that there is continuity in the collection and assessment of data. Each score adds to the previous ones hence becoming holistic in nature. The scores that the student gets during the course of learning determine his/her career path well before the terminal examination. That is to say, assessment mode of a student's performance at the end of the year or course of study is based on cumulative scores from a series of assessment instruments. This aspect of feedback is very crucial to the teachers, school administrators, parents and the learners themselves. It enables them to make career decisions well in time, where assistance is needed the learner gets it before it is too late.

Lastly, continuous assessment is guidance-oriented in the sense that it provides information that guide the learners to grow and develop in the right direction. Diagnostic and formative tests are administered from time to time during the course of study. It might be too late to wait until the end of the programme when irreparable damaged has taken place in the student. Such tests provide the information needed to guide the learner. Continuous assessment provides the opportunities to diagnose weaknesses on the part of the learner and the teacher in time (Alufohai & Akinlosotu, 2016).

Zimbabwean context of Continuous Assessment

The rising unemployment in Zimbabwe is attributed to too theoretical education which does not develop lifelong skills for sustainable development (Coltart, 2012). The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education introduced together with CA, a Skills Orientation Program in which graduates would familiarize themselves with industrial skills to become entrepreneurs who can create employment (Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education, 2015-22, Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999). The idea of having a socially and economically transformative education seems to be detached from the reality of implementing it. There are always variations in curriculum implementation, one of the chief reasons being the difference in geographical locations that are closely linked to resource availability.

Policy frameworks guide the implementation of CA. The context of continuous assessment constitutes five identified learning areas of the Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALA) given on a termly basis (MoPSE, 2015). CALA is a student continuous assessment method that was initially part of the 2015 new curriculum framework but was only implemented from the November 2021 ZIMSEC examinations (Sunday News, 2022). The critical aspects of the approach are that it takes into account learning activities such as projects, portfolios, written work, presentations and many more that require students to perform, demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and proficiency (Sunday News, 2022; Mataka, Matee & Hokonya, 2022). CALA contributes thirty (30%) percent to the students' final marks. CA is strongly advocated for to assist in the teaching and learning process.

The CALA are set, administered and marked by the subject teachers at school level, moderators are then deployed to moderate the marking and ensure standardization. However, it seems to be a different situation in practice. Teachers are not adequately trained to implement CALA in an inclusive approach (Kazu and Demiralp, 2016; Ornstein and Hurgins, 2004). Further compounding the situation is demotivation as well as falling teacher professional standards, which all stifle successful implementation of CALA. Its implementation is disfigured with irregularities, some teachers demand money from the students to guide them or do CALA for them- a malpractice that expose learners to watered down curriculum package. It is against this background that the current research aims to inquire about the efficacy of CALA to produce holistic academic graduates of the now and future generations who are able to fit in and blend with technology integration skills. In this context, the researchers' main objective sort to make a constructive critical evaluation on the extent to which the CALA is meeting the set standards as well as saving the purpose for which it was introduced.

The standard for continuous assessment in Zimbabwe

MoPSE (2015) gazetted seven characteristics of a standard CALA. These are:

1. The CALA must be problem/research/situation based
2. It must allow application of knowledge/concepts and skills taught
3. Must allow generation of knowledge
4. Must allow creativity and or innovativeness
5. Must have multiple activities
6. Must promote integration of learning areas
7. The language must be appropriate for the learning level.

In addition to the seven characteristics given in the curriculum framework, the policy states that the teachers must administer one CALA per term and must be through by second term of the examination year.

Methodology

The research design of this study is an exploratory case study. An exploratory case study design is useful when the research aim is to develop new insights about a phenomenon that has not been sufficiently researched on (Ferreira & Lind, 2023). The researcher chose this design as it allowed in-depth subjective evaluation in an unrestricted manner about the worth or adequacy of the CALAS based upon Discrepancy information between ZIMSEC Standards and Performance measures in schools. In addition, the exploratory case study was appropriate in this study as it allowed an examination of specific individual teachers and CALA moderators in their contexts to raise issues that affected them regarding continuous assessment in different secondary schools.

Participants

Ten (10) participants, five (5) Advanced Level teachers and five (5) CALA moderators took part in the study. Using purposive sampling, chief moderators for different A Level subjects and 5 teachers from different A Level schools (rural boarding secondary, rural day secondary, mining, farm and resettlement secondary schools) in Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe were selected to take part in the study. This allowed the research to generate data from different educational contexts in Zimbabwe. Consistent with ethical practice, the study did not use real names of participants in order to protect their identities so that information was not traced back to them. Table 1 summarises the demographic data of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Teacher Participants

AGE	30-40	41-50	Above 50	ABOVE
	2	5	3	
GENDER	Male	Female		
	6	4		
QUALIFICATION	Diploma	First Degree	Masters' degree	Other
	0	6	4	0
EXPERIENCE	5-10	10-15	15-20	Above 20
	1	2	3	4

Data collection

The selected participants were interviewed. The in-depth interview guide was designed to allow the participants to freely express their experiences in designing, marking and moderating CALAs. The interview guide was validated through pilot studying the instrument with two A Level teacher who were not part of the study. The researchers carried out the interviews within a period of one week. Data from the interviews were captured using a digital recorder and notes with the ethical principle of informed consent observed. The researchers also carried out document analysis of different CALAS given to the students in the 2022-2023 session and the teacher marking guides.

Data analysis

After collecting the qualitative data through in-depth interviews and document analysis, the data was group according to the CALA standards and tabulated accordingly. Discussion of the tabulated data was then carried out. Verbatim comments from participants were also included to support each theme raised during the data analysis process. To ensure trustworthiness in this research, two data generation strategies, in-depth interviews and document analysis, were used for data triangulation.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented in thematic form as rased by the participants. The themes are derived by the standards set by MoPSE so that a comparison between the standard (S) and the performance (P) is practical. This will make it easy for the researcher to come up with the discrepancy (D). The results from the comparison will enable the researcher to measure the efficiency of the curriculum reform.

1. CALA adherence to standard 1- research/ problem based

The findings discussed here were developed by the responses that came from the chief moderators, A level teachers as well as the researcher's observations from the CALA tasks and marking guides given by teachers in different subjects. The ZIMSEC Standard One is clear and in adherence with the Competence Based Curriculum. The aim of the standard is to enable the students to identify a problem from a given scenario and attempt to solve it through research and critical thinking as advocated for by John Dewey's (1894) Pragmatism. The theory emphasised that students learn by doing rather than memorising. They must learn from relating to their environment and solve the problems that affect their daily live. The findings are summarised in table 2 below.

Table 2: Standard 1-research/problem based

Standard		Observed performance	Reasons given
1	Research /problem based	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most activities showed a problem to that needed solving. 2. The research aspect lacked in many of the tasks. 3. The tasks could be solved without data collection from different stakeholders. 4. Responses by students showed little knowledge of research 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time constraint 2. Boarders could not go out of school boundaries to collect data. 3. Teacher knowledge gap. 4. Need for tasks which are easy to mark. 5. Students were not taught research

The findings confirmed Sunday News (2022); Mataka Matee & Hokonya (2022) and Gama (2022) assertions that the CALA leave a lot to be desired. They are failing to meet the intended standards. The observed analysed documents showed that teachers were not able to develop CALA guides which were based on problems that required students to embark on research. were the CALA guide mentioning the issue of research student's responses showed lack of understanding of basic research knowledge. The students did not know how to design questionnaires, interview guides or any other data collection instrument. The teachers above 45years of age confessed that they also lacked knowledge of research methods, as they have never done research in their academic life. The other reason given was time constraints. The teachers concurred that the number of CALAs to be done by one student were just unbearable; five per subject and some students study as many as 12 subjects. If proper research had to be carried out then the students would not be able to cover other aspects of the syllabus which constitute the other 70% of their work. Teachers also lamented their workload. Those who knew how to carry out research pointed out that they are workload is abnormal hence they give tasks that are easy to mark. Upon being asked how they were moderating the moderators responded that generally the teachers' mark and the moderators' marks must be in the plus or minus five range. If the range was two wide then the CALA would be disregarded; to protect each other as well as their contracts they actually confessed that they end up marking within the accepted range.

CALA adherence to Standard 2: Application of skills & knowledge

The second standard of the CALA focus on application of skills and knowledge. This standard required student to display the acquired knowledge and skills in solving the problem raised in the CALA in fulfilment of standard one. Table 3 summarises the findings.

Table 3: Application of skill and knowledge

	Observed performance	Reasons given
2	Application of skills & knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The most emphasized skill in the policy guide is the information technology. The researcher realized that most CALAS were handwritten. Where the computer was used it was just amateur Microsoft word without graphs to illustrate the ideas or even page numbers for referencing. 2. Very little skill shown because most tasks were theory based. 3. There was lack of critical thinking, there was a lot of regurgitating of given notes.

The findings reflected that there is no uniformity and standardisation in the way CALAS are being instituted in schools. One good example was in A Level Family and Religious Studies. At one school, students were asked to provide symbols used in different religions and briefly discussing its meaning. Task was worth 100 marks, 25marks for each symbol. This was a low order task and the whole class had marks ranging from 80-100%. In the same province another teacher had given students in the same students to identify diviners in the different religions. The second part asked then to collect at least two artefacts used in the different shrines. Lastly, they had to discuss the uses of the artefacts. The highest mark in the class was 85%. Comparing the two CALAS one can easily see the discrepancy which exist in the way continuous assessment in Zimbabwean schools. The finding confirms what Bjaelde et al. (2017) refer to as the worst disadvantage of continuous assessment; lack of standardization. It would probably be better for the responsible ministry to come with proper guidelines of the CALA guides and the expected competencies in each of the tasks.

CALA adherence to Standard 3: Creativity & innovation

In the ever changing world, there is need to develop students who can innovate and adapt to the needs of the community they leave in (Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training, 1999). To satisfy this need MoPSE policy guidelines for CALA include creativity and innovation as a standard that has to be taught in schools and examined through continuous assessment. Findings on teacher adherence to this standard are summarised in table 4.

Table 4: CALA adherence to creativity and innovation

Standard	Observed performance	Reasons given
3	Creativity & innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very minimal, most of the CALAs were theoretical so there was little innovation seen. 2. The CALAs lacked the practical aspect hence there was no evidence of real problem solving innovations identified. 3. Where students used computers their word documents showed creativity when they were requested to insert pictures and illustrations for their ideas.

The major thrust of Competence Based Education and the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, (2016) is to push for a practice-based education (Pindula, 2021) CALA is intended promote learner-centeredness, critical thinking problem solving and creativity. The findings showed that the philosophy guiding the introduction the CALA has not been understood by the teachers or they are deliberately disregarding it.

CALA adherence to Standard 4: Multiple activities

One of the commonly mentioned weaknesses of terminal examinations is their focus on cognitive skills as well as them once off nature (Tebeje & Abiye 2015). The introduction of CALA in 2015 was meant to correct that anomaly through giving a series of activities that include cognitive as well as psychomotor and emotional skills. Findings on teacher adherence to this standard are summarised in table 5.

Table 5: Multiple activities

Standard	Observed performance	Reasons given
4 Multiple activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The standard requires that every candidate write five CALAs that constitute. All the candidates from the observed schools had the five CALAs in place. 2. Most of the activities however, focused on cognitive skills. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Five CALA marks have to be entered as course work and failure to do that would mean that the student's examination marks will not be acknowledged. When this happens, the teacher has to be answerable. This can cost the teacher's job.

The major weakness levelled against terminal examinations is that they decide the fate of the student based on what happens in three hours yet the student has been learning for two years (Makuvire et al., 2023). As indicated by Dikli (2003) the anchor concept in the continuous assessment discourse is the term assessment. Assessment can be understood as day-to-day activities that show the abilities of the students to grapple with the central challenges of a discipline in real-life contexts in a comprehensive manner. The findings confirmed the claims by Makuvire et al. as students were given five different tasks to constitute their course work mark. However, concern was raised because the tasks were biased towards the cognitive skills ignoring the emotional and psycho motor aspects.

CALA adherence to Standard 5: Integration of learning areas

MoPSE (2020) & Matarise (2023) emphasise on the need to nurture cooperation, and digital literacy in students. Integration of learning areas can increase cooperation among students as they work for a common cause. Computer Science becomes a compulsory subject for all students as they work to meet the demands of different learning areas. Integration also increases professional cooperation among the teachers. Adherence to the standard is summarised in table 6.

Table 6: Integration of learning areas

Standard	Observed performance	Reasons given
5 Integration of learning areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In one school, this was excellently done in the Arts class. The Sociology, English literature and Shona Literature gave almost the same CALAs then differ on marking focus. 2. In most schools, the different learning areas operated as separate entities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integration of CALAs reduces the pressure on the students since one research will be used to respond to three tasks from different subjects. 2. It saves time and helps the students to appreciate the importance of every subject they are studying

The major outcry from the Integration of learning areas is an aspect that would ease the workload of continuous assessment on the learner. The findings showed that this was only done at one school, by the teachers teaching the arts subjects. This approach to CALA makes the learners appreciate other subjects as well as give them ample time for research. Those who did not employ the technique did that out of ignorance. It shows that there is need to staff develop teachers on different approaches to CALA.

CALA adherence to Standard 6: Language appropriate for learning level

As stated in the CEIT, communication is a key to the development of the country. Continuous assessment has to ensure that students are able to communicate effectively as well as respond correctly to given situations. Findings on CALA effectiveness in nurturing good language are summarised in table 7.

Table 7: Language appropriate for learning level

Standard	Observed performance	Reasons given
6 Language appropriate for learning level	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This was generally adhered to. 2. Where substandard CALAs were given some anomalies were observed because the language was too straightforward for Advanced Level students. 3. Observation from students' work showed levels of English language proficiency. Some work was written in flawless English whilst others could hardly communicate. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language is determined by the proficiency of the class. It would not make sense to set very difficult CALA, which the students will not be able to interpret. 2. Those who set CALAs in standard A Level language argued that this was to train the students in what they should expect in the terminal examination.

The population under study were predominantly Shona speakers. English is their second language and the language of instruction. Most students at the farm, rural and mine school only use English language at school; it is not the home

language hence their limited vocabulary. All the CALAs, except those for Shona, were set in English. Where the teacher used standard technical A Level terms some of the students would get the meaning wrong. To avoid failing students some of the teachers simplified their guides. Language did not only affect interpretation, it also affected expression of points. Those with a weaker language command gave short unelaborated answers. This compromised their marks. The impact of language was increased by lack of adherence to Standard 5. If the teachers were also looking at psychomotor and emotional domains then they would come up with a holistic assessment of the students.

CALA adherence to Standard 7: Cumulative over time

Alufohai and Akinlosotu (2016) describe CA as cumulative in the sense that there is continuity in data collection and assessment. Each score adds to the previous ones, hence becoming holistic in nature. MoPSE considered this characteristic of CALA as standard 7. adherence to the standard is summarised in table 8.

Table 8: Cumulative over time

Standard	Observed performance	Reasons given
7 Cumulative over time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In some schools, dates on the CALAs and CALA guides showed that the work was done cumulatively over time: one CALA per term for five terms. 2. In some schools, teachers gave all the CALAs during the first year of the two-year A Level course. 3. Some teachers gave all the CALAs at the end. In the third term of A Level just before the terminal examinations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This creates manageable workload for both the students and myself. 2. Teachers prefer to work on course during the first year so that the students will have ample time to prepare for terminal examinations in the second and final year. 3. Generally, students are not serious with coursework (CALA) before the register for the final examinations so it's better to give them pressure during the last term of the two-year course. They work and submit on stipulated times.

Alufohai and Akinlosotu (2016) describe CA as cumulative in the sense that there is continuity in data collection and assessment. Each score adds to the previous ones, hence becoming holistic in nature. The findings did not satisfy this standard. Of course, the marks were derived from different assignments done on different days but most of the work was not spread out to show the student's performance over the two years. The timing of the CALAs would obviously advantage or disadvantage other students depending on what was happening during the period chosen by the teacher for continuous assessment.

CONCLUSION

The study raised critical issues regarding the shortcomings related to the effectiveness of the new assessment reform, continuous assessment. At the centre of the implementation of the assessment regime should be an empowered teacher who possesses a vast knowledge on the reform and commitment to the fulfilment of the set standards for CALA administration. The notion of CA is to reduce the over-dependence on assessing one domain, the cognitive that has dominated the assessment discourse, to holistic and eclectic approaches that grow students to be able to solve their own situational problems. MoPSE has not been consistent on evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum reform. This gave teachers a room to implement the noble reform without commitment to set standards. The fact that the A Level teachers in Zimbabwe have not been equipped with the right knowledge and effectively monitored has resulted in superficial reform implementation. It has been observed that on paper, continuous assessment is being practiced in the Zimbabwean secondary schools. In reality, teachers do continuous testing of students, which is inconsistent with the dictates of MoPSE guidelines and continuous assessment in general. In a worse situation, these tests are written at the beginning or the end of the course for marks to be forwarded to the examination board for input, defeating the spirit of continuous assessment. It is also disheartening to note that much of the work given as continuous assessment is still biased towards cognitive skills with little consideration of the psychomotor and emotional skills. There is a need to learn from previous experiences in education that continuous curriculum program evaluation is inevitable to yield the desired educational results.

Recommendations

In view of the efficacy challenges facing continuous assessment implementation in Zimbabwean secondary schools, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should adequately prepare teachers, on how to construct, administer and assess different types of continuous assessment tasks that cater for all the domains. Workshops of this nature must emphasise on CALA standards so that teachers familiarise with them and use them in the implementation of CALA. In addition, knowledgeable personnel should continuously conduct workshops of this

nature. Adequate time should be given to the workshops to ensure uniformity in the implementation of continuous assessment in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

2. There is a need to develop manageable teaching loads for teachers to effectively administer standard continuous assessment tasks to completion. Reduction of the number of CALAs given per subject can be a solution.
3. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should invest in continuous monitoring and evaluation of curriculum reforms. They should bear in mind that curriculum reforms never achieve a state of institutionalisation in these ever-evolving times. What is needed is continuous evaluation and upgrading of the reform in order to meet the desired standards.
4. Continuous assessment is multi-stakeholder in nature, and there is a need to sensitise important stakeholders in education like communities, parents and students for their active contributions on the effectiveness of the reform. With support from these stakeholders, the much-needed results from the continuous assessment may be realized.

Area for further research

The study was conducted with A Level schools in one province; the results might not apply to other school environments in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the study recommends further study on the topic with a wider sample including Grade 7 and Ordinary Level CALAs to achieve generalisability.

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