



Research Article

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An Assessment of the Implementation of Continuous Assessment Learning Activity in Secondary Schools in Chirumanzu District, Zimbabwe: A Case of Hama High School

Shepherd Gama *

Doctor of Philosophy Degree Candidate & Faculty of Education, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The introduction of Continuous Assessment Learning Activity (CALA) was considered by National Association of Secondary School Heads (NASH) as putting much work on teachers and learners. Most parents and learners complained that the activities assigned to learners consume much of the time which can be used for lessons in the classrooms for enabling teachers to cover syllabi. Cases were reported where some teachers charged learners for writing continuous assessment learning activities for learners. Many teachers in secondary schools indicated that Continuous Assessment Learning Activity program put too much pressure on them as one teacher may mark many learners' activities. It is against this background that the study sought to find out challenges faced by learners and teachers in implementing the Continuous Assessment Learning Activity program in secondary schools in Chirumanzu District in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: CALA, NASH, Learning, Teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education introduced the Continuous Assessment Learning Activity (CALA) in 2020. CALA was introduced for equipping learners with life skills that enable the learners to solve problems they face in life and promoting innovation and employment creation in the country. This approach entails assessing learner competences on a continuous basis that includes knowledge, skills, abilities, values and traits indicating what learners are able to do and become. The learner profiling entails detailing learner traits, discipline, values, attitudes, skills and knowledge (acquired or inherent) (MoPSE, p.1). In addition, the learner profile records leadership skills and attributes at the completion of the life skills orientation programme. Learners are involved in carrying learning activities assigned by the teachers as part of course. The coursework obtained by learners from CALA activities will be considered for summative evaluation at both Zimbabwe School Examinations Council Ordinary and Advanced levels. This paper seeks to explore the challenges faced by secondary schools teachers in implementing Continuous Assessment Learning Activity. The writer recommends the measures for solving the challenges faced by teachers in implementing CALA programme in secondary schools.

Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALA)

Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALA) are concerned with measuring performance against the set standards or benchmarks as defined by the curriculum (MoPSE, 2019). Apart from focusing on mastery of content, knowledge and its application to practice, it recognises the acquisition of skills that will make learners productive, employable and have the capacity to create employment. This is any learning activity or assessment that requires learning to perform, demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and proficiency. Continuous Assessment Learning Activity presents a situation that calls for learners to apply their learning in context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Process Model

The process curriculum has its roots in a strong learner-centered approach with the emphasis on providing learners with a balanced mix of knowledge and skills (Duminy & Sohng, 1980). It tries to avoid the apparently one-sidedness of instruction approaches in which learners are inducted into particular academic disciplines or knowledge bases. Perhaps the most important force behind this model is the dissatisfaction that many practitioners have with the product model with its emphasis on rote learning and reproduction of textbook information. At the end of a particular course it is often difficult to determine exactly what it is that

learners have learnt and to what use they can put this information. The process curriculum has important implications for both instructional and feedback systems. Teachers have to attend to both knowledge and process. The learner has also to be actively engaged in acquiring or refining the process. Some learners may need more repetition and consolidation of particular processes and this has implications for marking. Teachers will need to explore a variety of assessment practices that will provide adequate practice and yet ensure sufficient and useful feedback so that the learners can improve their proficiency in the process as efficiently and effectively as possible. This study adopts the Process Model which views learning as learner-centered (Duminy & Sohng, 1980).

Problem Statement

The problem under investigation is the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Continuous Assessment Learner Activity programme in secondary schools. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education conducted training sessions for equipping teachers on how to implement the CALA programme in secondary schools. The problem rests on teachers in secondary schools in Chirumanzu District who face several challenges when implementing the CALA programme. This study therefore seeks to recommend on how effective implementation of CALA in secondary schools can be achieved.

Aim of the Study

- To find out the challenges faced by secondary teachers in implementing Continuous Assessment Learner Activity programme.

Research Guiding Question

What are the challenges faced by secondary school teachers when implementing Continuous Assessment Learner Activity?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was qualitative in nature seeking to understand human perceptions and experiences on challenges in implementing the Continuous Assessment Learner Activity programme in secondary schools. It study employed an exploratory design in which the case study was used. It helped to discover and understand the challenges that impact on implementing CALA in secondary schools. The research population was composed of 27 secondary school teachers. Five secondary school teachers were sampled from Hama High School teaching staff situated in Chirumanzu District. Convenient sampling was applied in the identification of participants to ensure that strategic members of the school were selected for interview. Data was necessitated through the use of in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with secondary school teachers. Latent content analysis was used to analyse data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data was presented responding to specific research question as outlined above. Participants were coded as follows: ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4 and ST5 for easy categorization. The discussion is also concurrently done with the presentation of data for easy of analysis. The presentation of results is done following particular themes.

All the themes that came out under above research question are listed below and each theme was then discussed with reference to the data obtained from different sources. The following themes emerged from the above research question:

- Negative attitudes by teachers
- Too much work load for teachers and learners
- Lack of understanding by teachers and learners
- Lack of resources

Negative Attitudes by Teachers

Participants raised the issue of negative attitudes by teachers as the main drawback for effective implementation of the Continuous Assessment Learner Activity programme in secondary schools. Their responses were:

ST2: Most of the teachers in secondary developed negative attitudes in implementing CALA.

ST5 Teachers are demotivated because of meagre salaries they are receiving from the government so they do not want extra work load on their shoulders.

Teachers have negative attitudes in implementing effectively the Continuous Assessment Learner Activity programme. The lower salaries paid to teachers make them feel demotivated to implement effectively CALA programme. This is supported by Owen (1981) who says motivation for all members to work hard as they will benefit from shared profits. McClelland motivation theory believed that achievement motivated people are generally the ones who makes things happen and get results (Scanln and Keys, 1983). Lack of motivation for teachers resulted in them developing negative attitudes with the implementation of CALA in secondary schools.

Too Much Workload for Teachers

Most teachers echoed that CALA programme put too much workload on them. Their responses were:

ST4: Too much work load on the teachers. They has to assist each and every learner and some classes are still very large.

ST5: Balancing written work as per routine requirement is a real challenge. Some teachers have to mark 3 CALAs per learner for ordinary level with an enrolment of 200 learners. The

teacher mark 600 CALAs. In other schools teachers have both ordinary and advanced level classes. The same teachers should give written work as per departmental policy.

Such a standpoint suggests that CALA programme put too much overload on teachers which makes it difficult to implement the programme effectively. Teachers have to assist each and every learner when doing CALA course work. Some secondary schools have enrolment of 200 learners per form so the teacher has to assist big numbers of learners and mark them. This put much workload on the teacher. The same teacher has to give written work as per departmental policy. Teachers who teach both ordinary and advanced level learners have too much work overload which they find difficult to cope up with.

Lack of Understanding by Teachers and Learners

Participants affirm that many teachers and learners lack relevant knowledge for doing CALA coursework activities. They confirm that:

ST1: Lack of understanding of how CALA is done. In its current form it is not understood.

ST3: Teachers lack knowledge in proper implementation procedure since it is new in the curriculum.

ST5: Training was done where all primary and secondary school teachers were combined. Teachers therefore did not have time for training to implement CALA programme in their respect subject areas.

This implies that most teachers in secondary schools lack sound knowledge for implementing CALA programme. Secondary school teachers were trained in larger groups with primary school teachers such that they could not understand how CALA course work is administered for their particular subject areas. Teachers are required to assist learners in doing CALA assignments so they lack relevant knowledge for assisting learners. Such a stand point suggests that lack of understanding is a challenge that teachers face in administering CALA programme.

Lack of Resources

Teachers responded that CALA programme is difficult to implement due to shortage of resources. Their responses were:

ST1: Lack of resources adversely affect implementation of CAL Lack of resources. Learners do not have bundles for researching on internet.

ST4: Teachers and learners do not have adequate time for doing CALAs.

The responses from the teachers suggests that time for administering, lack of resources, and materials make it difficult for teachers and learners to CALA. The teachers are fully occupied with teaching business so they do not have time for administering CALAs. Learners are overloaded with school work, lessons and assignments as required by the departmental policies for all their subjects. Some of the activities assigned to learners require internet services where learners research for finding data for use when doing activities. There is no internet connections at Hama High School. These are challenges faced by teachers and learners when working on CALAs.

SUMMARY

The research established that teachers at Hama High School face challenges when administering Continuous Assessment Learner Activity programme. Effective implementation of CALAs fail due to; negative attitudes by teachers, too much work load for teachers and learners, lack of understanding by teachers and learners and lack of resources. These challenges were found to be prevalent at Hama High School leading to Curriculum Assessment Learner Activity coursework marks lacking credibility, reliability, validity and authenticity.

Recommendations

In view of the challenges explored from the study conducted at Hama High School, recommendation are provided which can help in improving effectiveness in implementing the Continuous Assessment Learner Activity programme in secondary schools.

- Teachers should be retrained in administering Continuous Assessment Learner Activity programme so they can design CALA title, teacher's guide, learners' guide, marking guides and moderation for their respective subject areas.
- Secondary schools can have contracts with internet service providers for enabling learners to research for data needed for doing the CALA assignments at low costs.
- Reduce the number of CALA assignments, learners can be assigned two CALA assignments that will contribute towards coursework for reducing the volume of work for both teachers and learners.
- Teachers can be motivated financially for them to maximise participation in administering CALA programme.
- CALA questions can be set at national level for enabling standardization and moderation of learners' marked CALA assignments.
- CALA assignments should be spaced enough over the two years, for ordinary level form three and form four and for advanced level form five and six. This reduces pressure on teachers and they will be able enough for administering the Continuous

Assessment Learner Activity programme in secondary schools.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CALA – Continuous Assessment Learning Activity.

NASH – National Association of Secondary School Heads.

MoPSE – Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

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