



Challenges in Implementing Continuous Assessment

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Abstract

This study deals with challenges in implementing continuous assessment at Aysaita College of Teachers' Education. This study obtained basic information from teachers and students in the college. It employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Seventy nine respondents comprising twenty two teachers and fifty seven students were sampled and used as subjects in the study. One questionnaire, one for teachers and one for students, were developed and used to collect data which were analyzed using mainly percentages. Findings show that the greatest challenges of implementing CA at Aysaita Teachers College include poor level of preparedness for tests on the part of students, poor test administration procedures, poor handling of scores and feedback to students, poor coverage of instructional contents by test contents, large classes, inadequate time for tests and lack of knowledge and skills of the appropriate evaluation techniques. Respondents suggested that time should be given to implementing CA, teachers should be adequately trained in the techniques of evaluation, relevant modern technology for its conduct and recording should be provided for teachers. These include reducing examination malpractices, engendering quality study habit in the student, improving educational and learning outcomes attainment among others. It was thus recommended that teachers should be given relevant training on modern evaluation techniques and schools should be provided with the enabling environment for effective CA.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions should educate students to become well informed and deeply motivated citizens, who can think critically, analyze problems of society, look for solutions to the problems of society, apply them and accept social responsibilities (UNESCO, 1997). This proclamation of UNESCO obviously refers to Colleges and universities where the issues of teaching and learning are much concerned with. Teaching and learning is a process of complicated activities which include planning, directing, guiding, organizing, as well as assessing and evaluating activities. Studies show that the assessment of learners' learning

continuously provides objective evidence necessary in the decision-making process in education. Aysaita College is one of the teacher education institutions which share the above objectives.

In Ethiopia, continuous assessment (CA) is defined as an on-going, diagnostic, classroom-based process that uses a variety of assessment tools to measure learner performance (MOE, 2005:5). The Ministry of Education introduced Continuous Assessment to improve teaching and learning. This thesis deals with the challenges in implementation CA approaches in assessing students learning activities; focusing on the shift from emphasis on continuous testing to emphasizing continuous assessment. There is no doubt among educational practitioners about the necessity of assessment as a basic condition for effective learning. However, challenges in implementing continuous assessment have been observed unlike the professional trainings of instructors' (HDP) and institutional pressures made on instructors of Aysaita College to apply CA in their own classrooms. Problems in implementing CA are associated with several factors. For instance, considering CA as if it were quiz, test, examination, measurement, and evaluation as well as misconceptions on CA are some of the existing challenges observed at Aysaita College. CA has been defined by professionals in the area of education. To mention some, Ferdissa (2005) said that CA is an integrated and prominent part of teaching and learning process at all level of education where institution or individuals are able to verify that students have achieved the learning outcomes and standards stated for different programs and courses.

Another definition by Ovando (2003) states 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 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 the learner in his/her entirety. It begins with the decisions that the teacher makes on the first day of school and ends with the decisions that the teachers and administrators make about the learners regarding end-of-year grading and promotion. The challenges in implementing continuous assessment could be: teacher educators' skills in test construction and administration, and their attitudes toward the continuous assessment approach and record keeping.

The objectives of the thesis were twofold: primarily, identifying the major challenges in implementing continuous assessment to improve the quality of learning and teaching; and secondly, to find out strategies of implementing CA. The study therefore were, aligned to the formative and summative aspects of continuous assessment. This study obtained basic information from teacher-educators and trainees on the challenges of implementing continuous assessment in Aysaita College, that which was named after Aysaita town in Afar regional state.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In productive teaching and learning classroom, both teacher and students view assessment as an activity designed to show what a person knows or can do (Pratt 1994) where learners and teachers seek, receive, pay attention, and respond to messages of inquiry, encouragement, confirmation, and correction. Such situation and activities are assessment in its broadest sense. The researcher has been teaching for about five years in teacher training institutions, during my experience, I have noticed that continuous assessment was scarcely being implemented as well as hardly understood rationally by instructors. It has been wrongly understood to the extent that it seemed to be repetitive testing.

Conducting a research on the topic at hand has been crucial that the existing assessment approach to teaching and learning activities are hardly far from the summative assessment approach. This study therefore, tried to find the major challenges in implementing continuous assessment procedures which made both teacher educators and trainees aware of the different possible ways of tackling the problems. Unlike the previous researchers, the research gap this study revealed is that, this particular investigation has made use of the four data gathering instruments; questionnaire, interview, observation and FGD. Therefore, triangulation was likely to be achieved to a better extent.

Hence, the need of this research study which is based on the following research questions.

1.3. Basic Research Questions

The following questions were, therefore, be addressed in this study:

1. What do teachers do to implement continuous assessment?
2. What are the major challenges that Aysaita College teacher educators face in implementing CA procedures?
3. What conceptual problems do teachers have regarding the implementation of continuous assessment?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this thesis was to investigate the main problems encountered in implementing continuous assessment approach

The specific objectives were summarized as follows

1. To identify what teacher educators do to implement continuous assessment
2. Identify and analyze the major challenges, faced in implementing continuous assessment approach.

3. To identify and analyze conceptual problems teachers have regarding the implementation of continuous assessment.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research was multi sided. The findings provide valuable information to teachers, curriculum planners and school administration as to what type of teaching strategies are ideal for particular group of students. It may also provide valuable data to future researchers who wish to conduct small scale research that addresses immediate needs of teachers and students alike.

The primary beneficiaries of this study are the students who invested so much of their time, energy and intelligence in a system of education that they hope would provide them with the best learning experiences to maximize their learning potential. Likewise, teachers of any kind who focused on their own teaching strategies alone and did not take into account continuous assessment to promote active learning can be benefited from the results of this study as an alternative approach to teaching-learning. Aysaita College's linkage and the community at large can be benefited through the improved training standard of students who will be employed teachers at primary schools of the community. This study was conceived in the hope of stimulating an interest in the quality of college teaching and initiating a scientific study of college teaching-learning. Moreover, the study could be used as a future reference for those who wish to engage in similar studies. In general, the finding of this thesis would hopefully benefit teacher educators, trainees as well as the institution in concern at large.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess the challenges in implementing continuous assessment. For this reason, only issues related to the challenges of assessment were treated. In addition, though concepts of assessments are broad and complex the study stick to some of the challenges of continuous assessment. This study was therefore, delimited to the current practice of teacher educators and students perception of continuous assessment at Aysaita teacher Education College. Generally speaking the scope of the thesis refers to the major challenges of implementing continuous assessment at Aysaita College.

1.7. Definitions of Key Terms

Continuous assessment (of learners' progress): 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. (Falayalo, 1986)

Formative continuous assessment: It refers to any assessment made during the academic year that is *meant to improve learning and help shape and direct the teaching learning process. This*

is to say that formative continuous assessment is informal and meant to collect information about learning during the lesson. TESO (2003) and AED (2006)

Summative continuous assessment: A procedure for gathering information about the students' achievement of the curriculum goals or objectives at the end of instruction or unit. AED (2006)

2. Literature Review

Under this chapter related literatures with challenges in the implementing continuous assessment will be reviewed. In doing this, attempt will be made to include recent materials and references which could provide relevant information concerning the topic at hand. This review literature is organized under the following topics and sub topics.

2.1. What is Continuous Assessment?

The definitions of continuous assessment given by various educators, researchers, as well as professionals are seen in terms of learners' progress.

Ovando (2003) describes 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. On their own part, Baker and Stites (1991) described that continuous assessment should involve a formal assessment of learners' affective characteristics and motivation, in which they will need to demonstrate their commitment to tasks over time, their work-force readiness and their competence in team or group performance contexts. 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 the learner in his/her entirety. It will begin with the decisions that the teachers perform on the first day of school and end with the decisions that the teachers and administrators make on the learners regarding end-of-year grading and promotion. Continuous assessment, in this context, occurs frequently during the school year and is part of regular teacher-pupil interactions. Pupils receive feedback from teachers based on their performance that allows them to focus on topics they have not yet mastered. Teachers learn which students need review and remediation and which pupils are ready to move on to more complex work. Thus, the results of the assessments help to ensure that all pupils make learning progress throughout the school cycle thereby increasing their academic achievement.

In today's policy environment, particularly in Ethiopian Colleges and Universities testing has become a critical component of education reform. Policy makers and education administrators often view test scores as a measure of educational quality and use test scores to hold schools accountable for teacher performance. Continuous assessment is, an alternative or a supplement to high stakes testing of pupil achievement, offers a methodology for measuring pupil performance

and using those findings to improve the success of pupils (Nitko, 1995). Yet another idea that goes hand in hand with Nitko, views Continuous assessment as a powerful diagnostic tool that enables pupils to understand the areas in which they are having difficulty and to concentrate their efforts in those areas. Continuous assessment also allows teachers to monitor the impact of their lessons on pupil understanding. Teachers can modify their pedagogical strategies to include the construction of remediation activities for pupils who are not working at the expected grade level and the creation of enrichment activities for pupils who are working at or above the expected grade level (Ovando, 2003). Hence, the continuous assessment process supports a cycle of self-evaluation and pupil-specific activities by both pupils and teachers.

In continuous assessment, teachers assess the curriculum as implemented in the classroom. It also allows teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching strategies relative to the curriculum, and to change those strategies as dictated by the needs of their pupils. In addition, continuous assessments provide information on achievement of particular levels of skills, understanding, and knowledge rather than achievement of certain marks or scores. Thus, continuous assessment enables pupils to monitor their achievement of grade level goals and to visualize their progress towards those goals before it is too late to achieve them. (EQUIP I: 2003).

Continuous assessment is the conduct of frequent assessment for purposes of deciding how well students are achieving the learning outcomes and what you and they might do to improve their learning (EQUIP II, 2008:18). Continuous assessment in this context means obtaining information about students frequently instead of obtaining information only rarely. Frequent interaction between pupils and teachers means that teachers know the strength and weaknesses of their learners. These exchanges foster a pupil-teacher relationship based on individual interactions. Pupils learn that the teacher values their achievements and that their assessment outcomes have an impact on the instruction that they receive. One-to-one communication between the teacher and the pupil can motivate pupils to continue attending school and to work hard to achieve higher levels of mastery. Continuous assessment is a classroom strategy implemented by teachers to ascertain the knowledge, understanding, and skills attained by pupils. It is a means for collecting information to check students' attainment of the frequent learning outcomes, the progress that students have made, the problems they experienced in learning, and the effectiveness of your teaching methodologies. Continuous assessment is mentioned, acceptable quality maintained, and remedial intervention be given when shortcomings are observed. Although continuous assessment implies frequent assessment of frequent of students one should realize that frequent assessment alone does not mean improve teaching and learning. One must use the assessment results specifically improving teaching and learning. Continuous assessment results give students feedback that tells them how to improve, not simply give them a mark or identify the questions they missed on a test. If one discover from an assessment that the class did not understand some of the material, one will need to use this information to modify ones teaching.

According to many of the sources Continuous assessment is divided into two major types: formative continuous assessment and summative continuous assessment (SCA).

Formative continuous assessment (FCA) is an ongoing process for checking learners' readiness, understanding, difficulty, effectiveness of teaching approaches, and so on. It is ongoing because it is part of the instructional process as it unfolds everyday in classroom. FCA is not one shot activity (USAID, 2008).

Summative continuous assessment (SCA) is a process for collecting information about students learning that is used to make decisions about certifying, grading, reporting to parents and promoting. It is usually done at the end of a unit, a course, a semester, or a program. Most of the time examinations are major instruments of summative assessment. Think of SCA as meaning to collect information to help someone sum up what students have learned from their lessons (USAID, 2008).

As defined in the Ethiopian context, continuous assessment includes both formative and summative continuous assessment procedures. According to TESO (2003) and AED (2006), formative continuous assessment refers to any assessment made during the academic year that is *meant to improve learning and help shape and direct the teaching learning process. This is to say* that formative continuous assessment is informal and meant to collect information about learning during the lesson. Summative continuous assessment sometimes referred to as selected graded continuous assessment or planned formative assessment, on the other hand, is based on the learning objectives specified in the syllabus and used to assign grades that count towards the final grade. Although both formative and summative continuous assessment procedures are necessary for good teaching “it is formative continuous assessment that holds more promise for improving teaching and learning” (AED 2006). In general, Nitko (2004) in AED (2006) provides a summary on the distinction between FCA and SCA like this:

Table1. Types of Assessment

Formative Continuous Assessment	Summative Continuous Assessment
Occurs before and during instruction for the purposes of guiding learning and teaching	Occurs at the end of instruction for the purpose of evaluating students' achievement of the curriculum objectives
Mostly informal assessment	Mostly formal assessment
Assessment occurs frequently to guide teaching, give practice, and provide feedback	Assessment occurs periodically to determine achievement of curriculum objectives, assign grades, certify attainment, and in combination with other assessments to place students (2003: 24).

This implies that formative continuous assessment requires teachers to use the assessment results to improve student learning and guide teaching. This implies that formative continuous assessment is much more useful to students and teachers than summative continuous assessment. Moreover, Eliss (2003) points out that continuous assessment is further divided in to two: incidental and planned formative assessment. These seem to be conceptually similar to the terms

formative and summative continuous assessment respectively. Planned formative continuous assessment involves the classroom use of formal tests.

Incidental formative continuous assessment, on the other hand, refers to “the ad hoc assessment that teachers (and students) carry out as part of the process of performing a task that has been selected for instructional rather than assessment purposes” (Eliss 2003: 314). Moreover Eliss (2003) confirms that incidental formative continuous assessment is more useful to both students and teachers than planned formative continuous assessment. Planned formative continuous assessment or summative continuous assessment is, however, found to be useful for minimizing the problems associated with accuracy and fairness of students’ overall assessment which is pertinent in summative final examinations.

Having reviewed the narrowest to widest definition of continuous assessment many of the definitions given by authors and researchers in the area try to equate Continuous assessment with terms like quiz, test, exam, measurement, evaluation and the like. However, from the very purpose of this research, the term continuous assessment came into existence as a reaction to an older educational practice of examining students only at the end of the educational cycle. Under this older practice, students did not receive adequate feedback along the way about their learning and did not know how well they were progressing until the educational cycle was finished and it was too late. To correct the short coming of this older educational practice, educators now advocate assessment that is more frequent so that students and teachers have more about learning progress. It is this more frequent assessment that is called continuous assessment. Frequent interaction between pupils and teachers means that teachers know the strength and weaknesses of their learners. These exchanges foster a pupil-teacher relationship based on individual interactions. Pupils learn that the teacher values their achievements and that their assessment outcomes have an impact on the instruction that they receive.

2.2. Why is Continuous Assessment Needed?

Continuous assessment has been a feature of the Aysaita College of Teachers Education since the beginning of teaching and learning; however, it is unfortunate that continuous assessment has not made the expected contribution to students’ performance due to the way it was conceptualized and due also to some other inherent problems in its operation. Some of these Problems as well as the reasons why continuous assessment is considered an important feature in the study are discussed below.

The new Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO, 2003) program has emphasized the use of continuous assessment as an integral part of class room instruction that is necessary to improve the quality of education in the country. In relation to this, Shepard (2000) points out that “in order for assessment to play a more useful role in helping students learn it should be moved in to the middle of the teaching and learning process instead of being postponed as only the end point of instruction” (2000: 10). This is to say that assessment of learning is no longer seen as external examination added at the end of a course but as a continuous process from the very beginning of the course. Similarly, with respect to the need for continuous assessment, Mc Namara (1999) states: The field of evaluation is undergoing changes and to a large extent moving away from

psychometric testing and into educational assessment. The changes have come about as a result of development in how learning is perceived.

The learner is active in creating new knowledge; the teacher undertakes the role of tutor, supervisor, and co-learner. Learning and teaching are no longer viewed as two separate processes but as an interactive process. As a result, continuous assessment functions as a link between learning and teaching (1999:220). Moreover, Huerta-Macias (1995) in Shaaban (2001) notes that continuous assessment, unlike traditional tests, can document “a story for every student-and what is the ultimate goal of evaluation but to give us the knowledge to be able to reflect up on, discuss and assist a student’s journey through the learning process” (2001: 22). Similarly, Hedge (2000) confirms that students should view continuous assessment “as an opportunity to reflect upon and celebrate their effort, progress, and improvement” (2000:397). Therefore, this is to mean that continuous assessment becomes a diagnostic tool that provides feedback to the learner and the teacher about the suitability of the curriculum and instructional materials, the effectiveness of the teaching methods, and the strengths and weaknesses of the students. Furthermore, it helps to demonstrate to learners that they are making progress.

Regarding this, Puhl (1997) also adds that “the new policy of continuous assessment is aimed at bringing out a paradigm shift in educational assessment in several ways. The central characteristic of this shift is the moving of assessment from a judgmental role to a developmental role (1997: 3).

This is to say that continuous assessment is much more useful to students since it provides them with on-going feedback on their performance which helps them to become more self critical, and encourages them to attempt to make improvement as they actually work through a course rather than leaving the real learning process to the very end.

It would be both more indispensable for the teacher and fairer to the student to have some continuous record of the students’ spoken performance on different occasions and for different purposes. Similarly, Ellington and Earl (1997), summarize the need of Continuous assessment below:

- Provides early indicators of the likely performance of students
- Provides early warnings of which students are having problems with the course
- Encourages regular, systematic study and discourages last minute cramming.
- Places more emphasis on worth while learning.
- Uses a range of different assessment techniques.
- Provides much more extensive syllabus coverage than terminal assessment.
- Provides an on-going picture of how individual students develop and mature as they work their way through a course.

Ellington and Earl (1997) go on to argue that continuous assessment is still worthwhile if it is carefully planned and organized in advance.

It seems these evident that summative assessment does not depict the overall abilities of learners. Continuous assessment, on the other hand, allows classroom teachers to assess the various aspects of their students’ speaking skills through different assessment tasks that involve the use of oral English for different purposes and situations. Moreover, planned formative continuous

assessment as it is conducted at regular intervals can at least minimize the problems related to the accuracy and fairness of assessment results.

2.3. What are the major challenges of Continuous Assessment?

There are many problems that could be associated with continuous assessment practice in Aysaita teachers College. Rather, the researcher will mainly concentrate on the problems of continuous assessment that could be associated with particular focus on the teaching and learning process only. According to observations of the researcher, the problems of continuous assessment that could be associated with the teaching and learning include: teachers skills in test construction and administration, and their attitudes toward the continuous assessment approach and record keeping.

Implementation of CA in Aysaita Teacher College has been fraught with such problems as poor assessment skills of teachers. According to Hopkins and Harris (2000), the fundamental principles to apply continuous assessment, the teachers specifically failed to practice the following: most of the teachers did not assess their students by various assessment techniques, some teachers did not give on time feedback for their students and the majority of teachers did not consider feed back as an essential component of CA. With respect to poor attention of stakeholders to the use of CA as a quality control and assurance tool almost all teachers do not share assessment criteria with their students and do not give the chance of self reflection for their students. Sufficient funds were not allocated for refreshment trainings on the implementation of CA and CA score documents were not identified and separated from teachers actual mark list which should be prepared only for the purpose of registering the students marked scores.

In relation to this, Brown and Youle (1983) also confirm that terminal examinations seem to be unfair. They go on to say: There is a tendency to treat assessment as one-term or once a year activity. It would be both more informative for the teacher and fairer to the student to have some continuous record of the students' performance on different occasions and for different purposes (1983: 104).

It should, however, be noted that there are some authorities who believe that continuous assessment has some drawbacks. Ellington and Earl (1997), for example, point out the problems of Continuous assessment as follows:

- May make students feel that they are over assessed.
- May affect the relationship between students and tutors. Means when student are repeatedly assessed they may perceive as un fair due to poor understanding of CA
- May make students feel that every error that they make along the way can count against them.
- May make people feel that it turns out to be nothing more than a series of tests or “mini examinations”.
- May require tutors with a high level of experience in assessment. i.e regarding this as

I have seen in my class room observation that some teachers were disregarding CA in their lessons and others considering CA as if it is repetitive testing due to lack of experience.

2.4. Applications of Continuous Assessment

There are wide varieties of forms that continuous assessment. Therefore, it is difficult to provide detailed guidelines on how to plan and organize such assessment. However, a number of general guidelines agree with Hopkins and Harris (2000) on the application of continuous assessment in the classroom. According to Hopkins and Harris (2000) the fundamental principles to apply continuous assessment run below. These include:-

1. **Diagnosis:** Teachers are required to know what their students are able to do or capable of doing. This will provide them with the opportunity to know the ability of individual learners in their class.
2. **Goals:** Teachers are required to have a clear idea about the learning objectives of the language program in general and each lesson/ activity in particular.
3. **Diversity of assessment:** Continuous assessment requires the use of a range of different assessment methods to gather valid and reliable information about the students' progress.
4. **Shared criteria:** Teachers are required to share assessment criteria with their students.
5. **Feedback:** Feedback is an essential component of continuous assessment.
6. **Self reflection:** Continuous assessment creates opportunity for learners to manage their own learning and reflect back on their performance.

2.4.1. Using feedback as an essential component of continuous oral assessment

Feedback is regarded as the principal component of formative continuous assessment. For Eliss (2003) feedback is "a major goal of formative assessment" (2003: 313). Similarly, Shepard (2000) confirms that "providing feed back to the learner about performance will lead to self correction and improvement" (2000:11). This is to say that the teachers' comments on students' performance not only indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the students' speaking but they may also assist students in monitoring their own progress and identifying specific sub skills to develop further. They may highlight for teacher priorities in terms of future teaching, or recycling of points already covered. The information is also useful to parents.

Furthermore, Hedge (2000) points out that the feedback from class room based continuous assessment has an important role to play. Moreover, she goes on to note that some forms of assessment are explicitly intended to provide feedback to learners. A student knowing that performance has been good in a previous assessment can be a very positive motivator for further study. Specific feedback on strengths and weaknesses can aid study and help direct effort. The most useful (to the learners) forms of feedback comprise descriptive comments arising from

diagnostic analysis of performance. It is just as important for teachers to obtain feedback from assessment as it is for students.

Brown and Yule (1994) also believe that feedback has a motivating effect on students' classroom performance. They go on to state that "Receiving feedback can be an excellent motivator, especially when valid criticism is supported by appropriate praise and commentary" (1994:33). This is to mean that students will be motivated if they are given fair and constructive feedback. This implies that while giving feedback to students' performance, teachers should begin with the positive sides of performance and proceed to the things that they feel the students need to improve. Moreover, according to AED (2006), the most effective teachers do not routinely correct students' errors directly. It goes on to add: Instead they ignore errors when they are inconsequential to the solution process and forestall errors that the students have made previously by offering hints or leading questions. Only when the forstalling tactic fails do expert tutors intervene with a direct question intended to force the student to self-correct or they may engage in debugging, using a series of increasingly direct questions to guide the student through the solution process (2006:10).

As stated above, this seems to be a balancing act that new teachers will learn to perform well. This is to say that teachers need to directly correct the students' error only when the indirect method of giving correction fails to achieve the desired purpose.

In general, Race, Brown and Smith (2005) in Baye (1998) summarize the basic features and functions of feedback in continuous assessment like this:

1. Timely: students should receive feedback on their performance based on the principle of providing opportunity for students to make improvement before proceeding to the next performance.
2. Personal and individual: Feedback in continuous assessment should indicate each student's strength and weakness.
3. Articulate: Feedback given to students should be simple and easy for the students to understand.
4. Empowering: Feedback should help students make progress
5. Manageable: Teachers need to make the necessary preparation before the delivery of feedback to students so that they can manage it easily.
6. Developmental: Feedback should be detailed and informative so that both students and teachers can use it as an input for further decisions.

2.5. The Role of Teachers in Applying Continuous Assessment

One of the main aims of teachers in continuous assessment designed class is to make their students able to communicate information effectively. In pursuing this aim, the teacher may wish to be able to assess, at regular intervals, show his students are progressing and also to find out if there are areas of performance which are consistently weak and require additional attention (Brown and Youle, 1984: 103).

Researchers in this new era began to define the role of teachers as those who helped their students learn more than other teachers with similar students. These researchers observed the classrooms and classroom behavior of teachers' role and found that they shared several common attributes and abilities which tended to increase students' learning and satisfaction with teaching and to enhance students' self-concept. Below are the summary of the role of the reflective teacher in continuous assessment from Cruickshank, et al (1995:103) and HDP (2008). These points are.

1. Always tell your students exactly what it is you expect them to do, and make sure that your requirements and 'ground rules' are properly adhered to.
2. Ensure that any written instructions or guidelines provided to your students are clear, unambiguous and helpful.
3. Make sure that you create appropriate opportunities for students to discuss the continuous-assessment program with yourself and any other members of staff involved, both before they embark on the program and during the program itself.
4. Do not set major assignments too early in a course; begin with simple assignments and then make them progressively more demanding, so that students develop their competence and build up their confidence in a systematic way.
5. Make sure that students have sufficient time to prepare for and carry out each element of the continuous-assessment program, particularly if this involves fact-finding or research of some sort.
6. Make sure that your students are not over-assessed, either by yourself or by you and your colleagues. Too many assessments can be counter-productive, and can cause students unnecessary stress. Interdisciplinary assessments are possible, and reflect workplace practice.
7. Monitor standards carefully to ensure consistency between the marking of different students' work, to ensure that standards are maintained from one year to another, and to demonstrate fitness for purpose. This is particularly important if several people are involved in the marking.
8. Allow sufficient time for adequate marking and comment on the students' work, but try to ensure that they receive feedback in a reasonable time; institutional and course regulations should be followed here.
9. Review previous material.
10. Ask a curiosity-provoking question or pique students' interest by using a unique problem or scenario.
11. Provide an overview of the major points or topics of the lesson.
12. Demonstrate the concept or ideas of the lesson.
13. Provide a visual schema which depicts the relationship of various aspects or concepts of the lesson.
14. Provide a problem (orally, visually, etc.) to engage students in processing the concepts to be learned.
15. Convey interest, enthusiasm, and curiosity about the topic. Inform students of the objectives or goals of the lesson, and point out its relevance.

The role of teachers in using continuous assessment in the classroom can go to the point of keeping students involved in their lessons through the use of questioning, instructional clarity, and monitoring of understanding.

Teachers provide students with frequent feedback and reinforcement for their academic performance. Feedback is primarily informational and is intended to help students improve their performance. It is probably more important than reinforcement in promoting learning (AED, 2008). The most useful feedback includes the standard against which performance was judged, how the student's performance compares with that standard, and specifically how the performance can be improved. Feedback should be provided frequently, as soon after performance as possible, and should focus on the quality of performance rather than the student's intentions or effort (Fauzia et al, 2007).

Similarly Azeb (1984) considers reinforcement as an intended activity of the teacher to strengthen or promote desirable behavior by providing some type of reward. Reinforcement is directed at motivating students. Thus, it is most useful at points where students are most likely to become frustrated and give up (for example, early in the process of learning a task or at any time with slower students). As the conclusion of this topic, the teachers' role in continuous assessment can be organized around four aspects of instruction: engaging and maintaining students' attention, optimizing the use of instructional time, promoting meaningful teacher-student interaction, and providing effective feedback and reinforcement.

2.6. The Role of the Learners in Continuous Assessment

At the same time, the student is made accountable to the teacher with regards to the learning objectives established for the class. Learners are the most accountable bodies for their own learning. Like teachers, learners are yet other inseparable share holders of the teaching-learning process where the issue of continuous assessment is equally associated with. Learners can construct their own learning (Piaget 1996 cited in Biadgilign 2010). As for Piaget, if learners construct their own learning, they have the responsibility for their own learning. Then, responsibility could be expressed by planning, organizing, or directing, or, evaluating their own activities. Young people should have the right to control and direct their own learning so that the school should not retain the stigma of authoritative control particularly when the decision making freedom of learners is limited (Noll 2005:34). There is no way to disregard what Noll has said; schools have retained the authoritarian approach.

To be sure, if not for their authoritarian approach to teaching and learning, there is no reason to keep continuous assessment only for teachers. New ways of approach to continuous assessment are developing and suggested by constructivist approach that continuous assessment can be shared and negotiated with students. Woolfolk (2001:482) provides support that teacher and students together make a decision about the content, activities, and approaches to learning rather than having specific student's behavior and skills as objectives. Similarly, a few previously conducted research evidences have found when students involved in planning the assessment part only. Such as, Suzanne's (2011): curriculum under construction that which involves students in the creation of sociology classroom assignment preparation only. Thus, according to Suzanne, the average grades of these classes tend to be slightly higher, primarily because the grades of the poorest performers improve under this system.

2. Research Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. It comprises of the design of the study, population and sampling, sampling techniques, methods of data collection and data analysis.

3.1. Design of the Study

In order to achieve the intended objectives, descriptive research that used both qualitative and quantitative design methods were used. To examine the application of CA primarily qualitative approach was employed; in addition, quantitative approach was also used to supplement the qualitative data. The study was designed to be descriptive because the researcher gathered data through questionnaire, interview, and focus group discussion about CA and its challenges at Aysaita College with particular intention of describing, analyzing, and interpreting the nature of existing conditions of CA in the teaching and learning process. It has been said that descriptive research examines a situation as it is and concerned with how, what or what exists in relation to some preceding events that has influenced or affected a present conditions or event (Best, 1970 as cited in Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2003). Therefore, descriptive design was found to be appropriate to this study.

Usually students under each department were placed according to their interest. To examine the application of CA and its challenges at Aysaita College; interview with individual teacher educators; focused group discussion with students; and questionnaire to be filled by teacher educators were used. Besides, observation was also used to justify interviews, questionnaire and focus group discussions.

3.2. Population and sampling

The samples of the population of this study were students and teacher educators at Aysaita College Teachers' Education. There were Language, social science and Natural science departments, which have a total population of 448 students and 27 teachers in four department i.e. Language, social science, Natural science and professional study departments. From these, population there were a total of 79 sample subjects of which 57 are students. As far as teacher educators are concerned all of them were made to fill questionnaire since they were few in number. As a result 22 of them filled the questionnaire. Interviews were also made with 8[eight] teacher educators, who were selected through lottery system sampling technique.

3.3. Sampling Technique

The sampling technique for FGD was systematic random sampling in the case of all third year students. The selection of third year students was done intentionally because they were assumed to be familiar with the concept of CA. In order to select the sample students' random systematic technique was employed. Students' selection was made on their ID number, by taking every third

element i.e., taking 1, 3, 6, 9...until a total of 57 students out of 150. The students ID number was available with the registrar and in order to select the sample teachers' for interview lottery system was conducted.

3.4. Methods of data collection

Data collection instruments of different types were developed and used for the study; such as questionnaires, interview, observation and focus group discussions.

3.4.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaire was the main tool used to collect relevant information. It was also used to collect the necessary data from the large number of respondents at a time and for its naturalistic characteristics that allow respondents to express their idea and opinions freely and confidently. The researcher preferred questionnaire because it is easier to handle and simple for respondents to answer and fill within a short time. The questionnaire focused on the challenges teachers face in the implementation of CA. To examine teachers both open and closed ended questions were included. Initially the questionnaire was provided to five teacher educators as means of checking its validity and the response of the pilot test groups seemed that they understood the questions and contents. Their remarks and comments were well taken.

3.4.2. Interview

In this study interview was undertaken with individual teacher educators using semi structured interview which contained open ended questions. Here, the purpose of open-ended interview approach was to capture the points of views of other people. The approach seeks to avoid predetermining other people's views through prior selection of questionnaire categories. Having considered this, an attempt was made to complement the written information by collecting data from teacher-educators with the help of interview.

3.4.3. Focused group Discussion

It is argued that the focus group interview approach produces a wealth of detailed information allowing the researcher to gain insight into the thinking of individuals (Patton 1990). Similarly, this technique provides a means for in depth study without the categorization constraints of quantitative surveys. Considering this, the focus group interview was conducted with student teachers. The focus group discussion was administered in Amharic because the researcher felt that students can understand Amharic more than English. The role of the researcher during the discussion was as a facilitator just to probe and guide them to focus on issues provided for discussion. Here, the researcher jotted- down the main ideas raised by participants and also recorded the participants discussion.

3.4.4. Observation

Participatory observation was made on the general guidelines of classroom observation parameters developed by Aysaita College for practicum and class room observation purposes (See Appendix D); however, slight modifications were made to suit the study at hand. Actually, the researcher was explicitly aware of asking teacher educators and students about the proper implementation of CA, nevertheless, nothing substitutes actual observation of what is going on the actual setting. Observation was important in this study because it was sources of actual data in the implementation of CA as well as a means of triangulating data.

3.5. Procedures of Data Collection

As mentioned above multiple instruments or a triangulation approach procedure was followed to collect data where the procedure possibly varied depending on the nature of each of the instruments deployed. FGD, conducting observation, interviewing and administering questionnaires were the main tools up on which the whole tasks of data collection relied on. To this end, fifty seven (57) students were appropriately selected through systematic sampling and made to be participants in the FGD. Accordingly, six FGD groups were formed in which nine students are available in each one of them. On the other hand, twenty two (22) teacher educators out of twenty seven (27) were taken to fill the questionnaire. In this case, the researcher assumed taking all the teacher educators since they were small in number as well as could bring rich data instead of taking some of them. Closed and open ended questions were developed to be instrumental in collecting the attitudes and views or opinions of teachers.i.e. 23 closed and 10 open ended questions. Regarding the interview, 10 interview questions were prepared and conducted with the eight selected teacher educators. Besides, observation was used as a means of validating information acquired from interview, questionnaire and FGD. The classroom observations, which lasted for about four consecutive days, allowed the researcher to anticipate if there was proper implementation of CA as well as challenges of CA encountered by teacher educators in the teaching and learning process. The classes to be observed were selected randomly.

3.6. Methods of Data Analysis

3.6.1. Qualitative data; As mentioned above the nature of the assessment required the utilization of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. For this reason, part of the information obtained from FGD (Focused Group Discussion) interview and observation were analyzed and interpreted accordingly.

3.6.2. Quantitative Data; the analysis and interpretations of data acquired from the questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentages. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were drawn from interpretations supported by the available evidences.

3.7. Procedures of Data Analysis

After collecting all the necessary data, were organised and reduced as first and then coded, tabulated and processed separately for each item in away appropriate to answer the research questions. Descriptive statistics such as percentages were used to make analysis because it is

simple and everybody can understand the results presented by percentage. Moreover, the researcher found this statistics to be an approach analyzing tool as it conveys the sought findings of the study under investigation understandably. The data collected through FGD was first transcribed as it was stated by the participants and then carefully translated into the English language after repeated listening to the FGD and finally used for the analysis. Observation was used to supplement data obtained through questionnaire, interviews, and FGD method.

Briefly speaking, data collection procedures had the following patterns. These were: questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion and observation. This procedure was assumed to bring its own contribution in the process of data collection. Such approach would minimize the problem of social desirability in responding to the items.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data and the major findings of the study obtained from questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion. To achieve this, questionnaires consisting of closed and open ended questions and interviews were distributed to 22 teacher educators and focused group interviews with 57 student teachers of Aysaita College of teachers' education.

In data analysis and result discussion, the following descriptions were used for the purpose of clarification and representations of the rating scale. As it can be seen percentage as statistical method was employed to present and analyze items of the questionnaire quantitatively. Parallel with it to supplement and enrich the data, information obtained from open ended questions and interview, and focused group discussions were analyzed and described qualitatively.

Table 2. Description of Rating Scales

Full description	Acronym	Value
To a very great extent	VGE	5
To great extent	GE	4
To neutral extent	NE	3
To less extent	LE	2
To the least extent	LEAE	1

The purpose of this questionnaire was to examine the perception of teacher educators in examining challenges in the implementation of continuous assessment. The items were constructed along to a very great extent, to great extent, to neutral extent, to less extent, and to the least extent continuum. Assessments were conducted to collect data concerning the challenges in the implementation of continuous assessment by the teachers using rating scale.

4.1. The practice of CA at Aysaita College

Interviews made with eight (8) teacher educators revealed that CA is a means of continuously improving students learning, a means of making teaching learning effective; a process of making alignment between learning objectives and students learning. Eight of them said that they have

the tendency to use CA rarely, especially when they are not running out of time; besides when they are not overloaded and when the class size is small enough to be managed. Apparently, all of them assured that using CA is an indispensable thing in the teaching and learning process. Three out of them stressed the use of CA to identify strength and weakness of their students' activities in particular. Specifically, two teachers reported that CA is a means of making students efficient by applying different techniques while majority of them think that it is used in assessing students by giving a few points each time an affirmative response is obtained. The way they have understood has wider gap with what the existing literatures have said.

For instance, Ovando (2003) describes 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. Similarly, Baker and Stites (1991) describe that continuous assessment should involve a formal assessment of learners' affective characteristics and motivation, in which they will need to demonstrate their commitment to tasks over time, their work-force readiness and their competence in team or group performance contexts.

None of the teacher educators provided ideas similar to what has been said about CA particularly, Hopkins and Harris (2000). According to these authors the main components of continuous assessment include making diagnosis: set goals: using diversity of assessment: share assessment criteria with their students and providing feedback. From the above components of CA, teachers were asked about using diversity of assessments they used to implement CA in their receptive classes. In line with this, when teachers were asked to list out the various techniques of CA that they all used to assess their students during their teaching and learning process in the classes; they have reported that oral questions, quizzes, homework, or group work, tests and assignments are often used techniques. This shows that teachers do not have wider concept about CA beyond the above mentioned points. However, ICDR [2004] stated that CA is actualizing based on variety of items and continuous assessment techniques. Besides, the majority of teachers did not have interest in implementing CA. According to their report, teacher educators have attributed their lack of interest in implementing CA to shortage of time and large class size, while a few of them have interest because it makes learning effective, it helps to know whether the objective is achieved or not and it motivates students.

To see to what the extent teachers implement CA teachers were asked to express the frequency of using CA in their class. Almost the majority of teachers reported that they implement CA rarely and some times. Actually, all teacher educators accepted the call of national and regional educational policy to apply CA in the teaching and learning process. But they did not think this implies it should be successfully implemented, rather they believe such ideas may be easier said than done. One of the teacher educators said pitifully, "I for example, *proposed to implement CA such as provision of feedback to my students. So then, how can I make use of CA over all the densely populated class? You see the problem the idea is fine in theory than in practice.*" This kind of frustration was not limited to one teacher educator only; rather it was common among all of them.

Thus, one can infer from this, that most of the teachers are not making use of the full advantage of CA. Elliott, et al.(2000) also warned that all forms of assessment techniques contain some error, which implies that we must assess students frequently and with a variety of methods.

All teacher educators express that they have no the experience of sharing criteria with their students and they do not make their students aware of the criteria. It is, therefore, clear that teacher educators do not feel that absence of explicit assessment criteria make it difficult to effectively implement continuous assessment. (AED, 2006), students should be aware of the fact that that they are assessed not in terms of other students' performance but against specific assessment criteria. So, students should know what they are expected of before performing a particular assessment task

The majority of teacher educators reported that they use the information to identify the learning styles of the students, then to help them according to their preference and the rest of teachers replied that to improve students result where as only one teacher educator replied that he uses the information to identify the strength and weakness of students in the teaching and learning process.

Almost all teacher educators responded that they give constructive feed back immediately by orally, checking their paper in class and at home. This implies that teachers tried to perceive feed back as an essential component of CA. However, this answer of teacher educators was not supported by results obtained from the focus group discussion made with students. To be sure reports of the focus group discussion revealed that students were not receiving on time feedback they were rather used to move to the next task or assignment before they were told about the right or wrong decisions of their previous work. Therefore, it seems there are disparities between teacher educators and students responses about the provisions of feedback. Majority of the students asserted that they were not assessed by different methods. According to them, teachers were unable to assess their students' performance using different assessment methods. As mentioned elsewhere this could be due to lack of interest, large class size and shortage of time or any other reasons that this study could not find out. On the other hand, a small number of the respondents replied that they were assessed by using different methods such as class work, group work, test and assignment.

To justify, the reports acquired from teacher educators and students, a close examination of the classroom observation was made. The researcher observed four consecutive classroom observations which last for about 50 minutes each. The first, second third and four sessions were English, Civics and Afar Classes respectively. These observations took four days. The first day observation was on Monday morning at 3:20 October 22, 2012. At this time the randomly selected classroom became second year students under English Language department. This time a teacher educator came and greeted his students and immediately he rushed to the blackboard to write the date and the title of the day's topic. After a glimpse of discussion about the previous class soon the teacher educator kept on writing and explaining; consequently, students were busy writing down notes from the blackboard. After a while pause; he continued writing an exercise which consisted 10 comprehension questions. This type of process consumed most of the allotted time. The teacher educator was on his way to close the class when he said to his students "if you have questions and suggestions it is time for you now" and finally, he remarked his students that the comprehension questions were home work activities. Following his leave, another teacher educator came in to teach civics lesson. More similarly, the civics lesson ended as its former one and then next Afar language went the same way. Turn by turn all of the three lessons were attended by the researcher; however, none of them had marked activities of implementing CA:

such as involving students in self-assessment and peer-assessment practices; keeping records; providing feedback and the likes (for more detail criteria of CA, see appendix D).

In general this implies that most teachers did not use different CA techniques to assess their students. If teachers in the study continue to move away from CA, they will not be able to certain if their students are getting the lessons they give since the application of a variety of CA techniques could assess different types of cognitive level (Elliott, et at 2000). Conversely it can be said that the application of multiple assessment methods produces different messages to students (Brown and knight, 1994).

Most teacher educators express the need for continuous professional development in the areas of assessment. Some of the areas in which teachers need support include; Designing assessment tasks, assessment methods, ways of assessing student-teachers' prior knowledge and how to use those assessments. Therefore, this implies that teachers must have high level of experience in assessment to enable them make effective use of CA. From this point of departure it can be said that teacher educators knew that where the right ways implementing of CA went wrong and how they can be rearranged. In another word, if teacher educators were well familiar when and how they need a special support and training to apply CA, they would not have misconceptions about implementing it.

It is clear that the focused group discussion is comprised of 6 groups which made up of 9 number of students. Six (6) open ended questions were prepared for discussion. Results of the focused group discussion run as follows:

Concerning the purpose of CA, more than half of the students said that CA has the purpose of giving pass mark, while very few students understand CA as a method used to improve the teaching learning process and the rest of the students described as a means of improving student evaluation and the teaching learning process. Still others viewed it as a series of repeated testing activities. The discussion held with students also indicated that they were not continuously assessed by various assessment techniques. Similar results were also obtained from classroom observation that CA techniques were scarcely implemented. In line with this, teacher educators were asked to list out the various techniques of CA that they all used to assess their students during the teaching- learning process, they have reported that action research activities, home work, oral question, project work, quiz, exercise book checking, group work, test, assignment, final exam are often used techniques. Although some teachers have said so these assessment techniques, this was not supported by the observation results. This argument is further strengthened when one looks at the lacks of time to apply CA, large class sizes and because of other related drawbacks mentioned earlier in this study.

In general, Implementation of CA at Aysaita Teacher College has been fraught no matter what the previously research studies may say. The very surprising thing here is that the reasons behind challenges of CA at Aysaita Teachers College are still active despite the calls of previously studied researches.

4.2. Teachers response to what they confront to implement continuous assessment.

All teacher educators, except those who participated in piloting the questionnaire, filled the two pages questionnaire. As the result, data were coded, organized and tabulated using simple percentage method. Below, table three presented complete description of response of teacher educators extracted from the first sixteen items as it can be seen in table three.

Table 3. Teachers perception regarding the challenges in implementing CA

Table 3 shows that around 82% of respondents replied that adequate knowledge and understanding about the concept of CA is lacking them to a very great extent, whereas 9% of

No	Rating Scale items	Frequency of Response percentage				
		VGE	GE	NE	LE	LEAE
1	Lack of information on how to use CA	5(23%)	15 (68%)		2 (9%)	
2	Application of CA in your class	12(54)	5(23)		5(23)	
3	Conducting CA in large classes	12(54.5)	10(46)	-	-	-
4	Teachers lack of interest in CA	5(23%)	12(54.5)	2(9%)	2(9%)	1(4.5%)
5	Teachers tendency to use CA	9(41%)	9(41%)	2 (9%)	2(9%)	-
6	Teachers' perception of assessment practice	-	5 (23%)	9(41%)	5 (23%)	3 (13%)
7	Teachers' practice of CA	10(46%)	-	5(23%)	2(9%)	5(23%)
8	Shortage of time to practice CA	12(54.5)	9(41%)	1(4.5%)	-	-
9	Teachers Understanding about CA	9(41)	9(41)	2(9%)	2(9)	-
10	Lack of not being systematic and organized in assessment	5(23)	5 (23)	2(9%)	5 (23%)	5 (23%)
11	The suitability of assessment task with students ability	5(23%)	5(23%)	5(23%)	5(23%)	2(9%)
12	Poor record keeping skills of teachers	5(23%)	9(41%)	-	5 (23)	3(13%)
13	Selection on how students will be assessed	9(41%)	5 (23%)	-	5 (23%)	3(13%)
14	using CA results to make summative assessment	9(41)	9 (41)	-	4(25)	-
15	Lack of Providing Continuous and timely feedback on how students are performing	9(41)	5 (23)	2(9)	3(13)	3 (13)
16	Mismatching CA results with course objectives	5(23)	9(41)	-	5 (23)	3(13)

teacher educators remained neutral and the remaining 9% of teacher educators have been found to be familiar with proper application of CA and their responses go to the state of less extent. Besides, 5 (23%) respondents strongly agreed that continuous assessment is difficult to implement to the *very great extent*; 15(68%) of teachers replied *to great extent*; 2(9%) of respondents selected *to less extent*. The presences of constraints to implement CA at Aysaita College are quite sure but the point is that to what extent it is challenging to the teaching and learning process.

As results have shown, significance number of teacher educators lack interest, skills, commitments and practice in the process of proper implementation of CA. To be sure, almost eighteen out of twenty respondents replied that they lack interest and practice to implement CA. However, lack of interest among teacher educators varies from to a very great extent 5(23%); to great extent 12(54.5%); to neutral extent; 2(9%); to less extent 2(9%) whereas the remaining 1(4.5%) went to the least extent. These results stand against the substantial efforts made by Aysaita College in the last five years to create awareness and strengthen implementation of CA with the help of EQUIP II project 2008. Despite the provision of trainings to introduce CA in the teaching and learning process, Aysaita teacher educators linger with a sense of reactionary approach towards CA. The reason behind these results were attributed to shortage of time; large class size; lack of common guideline and lack of awareness.

With regard to shortage of time to practice CA around 55% of teachers' responses went to a very great extent, 41% of them to great extent and only 4% of respondents remained neutral how far time shortage was a challenge to implement CA. So this indicates that implementing CA without appropriate and sufficient time is found to be a considerable hindrance to proper implementation of CA. Furthermore, although there are several techniques of applying CA in large class size advised by scholars in the area; it has been reported almost by all the teacher educators of Aysaita College that large class size is challenging factor which complicated the implementation of CA. However, studies in the area of pedagogy justified that teaching large classes with CA are nowadays no longer a threat to the teaching and learning process. For example, Fauzia et al (2007) argue that large class size is often defined in numbers. However, number of students alone is not sufficient but rather there are physical conditions such as amount of space available; teaching focus; teaching methodology and availability of resources. On the other hand teachers' perception to practice CA varies from teacher to teacher. Around (82%) teachers replied that perceptions of teachers have become significantly determinant factors in the proper implementation of CA.

From lack of being systematic and organized perspective, response of teachers were distributed into, 5(23%) of to a very great extent, 5(23%) of to great extent, 2(9%), 5(23%) of to less and 5 (23%) replied to the least extent. Therefore, this implies that teachers are not systematic and lack organization in assessment. On the other hand regarding the suitability of assessment task with students ability , 5(23%) of the respondents selected that to a very great extent ,5(23%) Of teachers replied that to great extent , 5(23%) of the respondents to neutral extent and 2(9%) of the respondents replied that to less extent . This revealed that there is a very high mismatch between assessment tasks and student ability or the assessment tasks are not suitable with students' ability. On the same issue, the interviewed teachers revealed similar experiences. For example, one of the interviewed teachers wondered when he heard of implementing CA. Surprisingly, he said the following ideas.

Exactly implementing CA at Aysaita College is impossible in a real situation because it is time consuming; difficult to implement CA in all parts of the teaching and learning process; it is unusual way of teaching and learning, lack of interest as well as inadequate skills of teacher educators.

(A teacher educator at Aysaita teachers College in department of language)

Parallel with it, students responses from the focused group discussion supported that some students indicate that teacher educator hardly practice CA because of the large number of students they teach. They rush to cover the course contents. Most of the time they use short test to assess their students' progress. They do so because they do not have time to assess each student's performance. This implies that large class size, number of students a teacher educator teaches in a semester are constraints or challenges faced when students' performance are assessed. Here it is once again imperative to mention authorities who reminded that continuous assessment has some drawbacks. To mention some, Ellington and Earl (1997), point out the problems of Continuous assessment: although a lot has been said about CA it does not mean it is without challenges-most importantly as Ellington and Earl said it so: may make students feel that they are over assessed; may affect the relationship between students and tutors; may make students feel that every error that they make along the way can count against them; may make people feel that it turns out to be nothing more than a series of tests or "mini examinations" and may require tutors with a high level of experience in assessment.

Yet another significance issues students raised about the factors that hindered the proper implementation of CA were; Disagreement between teachers and students, absence of some students from class, perception of assessment practice and large class size. Furthermore, focused group discussion results indicated that delayed feedbacks for assignments or, students' works are common. Here is an extract from the focused group discussions.

In our teaching and learning process, feedbacks, especially to assignments are not timely returned. For instance, we submitted one essay assignment two months ago and we did not get it back until now, and surprisingly, we are again doing our second assignment.... it is a bit demanding to write the next essay. We have to know where we have gone wrong and the points that we have done splendid....due to many gaps, we cannot remember things well and we may not do better in our second assignment.

These students go on to express their practice about CA that portfolios and presentations are rarely practiced to assess student performance. Perhaps even students have found it difficult in getting their work checked and corrected by the teacher. More clearly, students reported that due the quick move over topics and subtopics of lessons, it is impossible to get opportunities of learning from mistakes.

In supporting students' response, most of teacher educators suggested the presences of challenges in the implementation of CA: more specifically, absenteeism, students misunderstanding about CA, and carelessness of students (Copying, cheating), are factors that hinder proper implementation of the method. These findings have similarity with previously conducted studies such as Fauzia, Negussie, Chinyere and Netsanet (2007) confirmed that CA is perceived as unfair due to lack of transparency; inconsistency among teachers and students. Moreover, teachers express frustration that despite constant correction students continue to make the same mistakes consequently teachers of large class sizes are stressed and frustrated by the amount of overwhelming number of students and marking activities they face. In their studies Fauzia et al (2007) revealed that absenteeism and carelessness of students caused complicated challenges in the implementation of CA. The researcher's observation also revealed that the number of students attended throughout four consecutive classroom observation days were considerably different. To be sure, there are 33 students in the department of English language, however, 24, 27, 20 and 22 students had attended the first, second, third, and fourth days respectively. Similarly in the department of geography and biology there are 45 and 60 students respectively, however, 31, 28, 27, and 26 students had attended the first, second, third, and fourth days respectively. In the case of biology department there were 47, 45, 42, and 39 students had attended out of 60 students. Therefore, this indicates that absenteeism is one of the major problems that negatively affect the implementation CA.

Furthermore, researcher's observation witnessed the absence of common guide line, shortage of materials, large class size, absence of record keeping, lack of peer and self assessments practices were the day to day events throughout the four observation days. Apparently, unpreparedness of teachers and students to implement CA, the resistance made by some students who wants to pass grades with minimum, effort, and shortage of time were also some of the problems cited by teachers as hindrance of CA.

Therefore this possible explanation for this result seems that many teachers are greatly affected in the implementation of CA because of the lack of information about CA.

The respondents were also asked to give their responses about conducting CA in large classes. Accordingly Table 3 Item - 2 around 12(54%) of respondents selected to a very great extent, 5(23%) and 2(23%) of teachers respond to great extent and the less extent respectively. To make sure response of the teacher educators, the researcher took lists of students from registrar of Aysaita College 2004E.C. the actual class size of students' as it was indicated in the list is greater than the standard placed by the ministry of Education (MoE, 2007). To name some of the departments, History, Geography, Language and Biology are departments with large class size of 50, 45, 48 and 60 students respectively. So, this implies that class size at Aysaita College is beyond the average recommended standard; consequently, it is possible to infer that teacher educators are confronting problems to conduct CA in large classes because it is difficult to record all students' day by day progress. With regard to teachers interest and tendency to use CA Table 4.2 Item - 5 indicated that 9(41%) and 9(41%) of teachers said to a very great extent, and to great extent respectively 2(9%) of teachers selected to neutral extent whereas the remaining 2(9%) of teachers' response found to be less extent. Apparently, the teacher educators were also interviewed (see Appendix B). Then, most of them replied that they have interest to implement CA in their teaching and learning process. One of the department head described that "Continuous Assessment is very important for improving Teaching and learning process. For this reason as to me it should be applied in every subject. This idea indicates that there are administrators who have good perception about CA. However, a few teacher educators expressed that they have no interest of implementing CA. According to them, this was due to large class size, and lack of training. This partially implies that teacher educators are less motivated to implement the CA effectively.

As far as record keeping skills of teachers were concerned 5(23%) of the respondents replied that to a very great extent, 9(41%) of the respondents replied that to great extent, 5(23%) of the respondents replied that to less extent and 3(13%) of the respondents selected to the least extent. Observation results indicate that none of the observed classes approved teacher educators were keeping records of students' activities. To be sure, the researcher had observed the mark list of teacher educators where the test results of students will be filled. By taking a look at the mark list one can estimate that continuous record keeping activities of teachers are limited to mid semester, and final examinations. In the mark list there are four boxes to be filled with mid, final, total and grade value of the students' points respectively. From this point of departure teacher educators were asked on how students will be assessed. As a result, 9(41%) of the respondents selected to a very great extent, 5(23%) of the respondents replied that to a great extent, 5(23%) of respondents replied that to less extent and 3(13%) of the respondents replied that to the least extent. Therefore in this case it seems that teachers have a problem on how students will be assessed. This uncovers another consideration that using CA results to make summative assessment received 9(41%) of very extent, 9(41%) of great extent, and 4(18%) of less extent from teachers. This indicated that teachers have misunderstanding on how and why to use continuous assessment. It is due to this reason that most teachers use CA to make summative assessment. Therefore, according to this result, it can be said that many teachers have problems of identification. In addition to this, lack of provision of Continuous and timely feedback on how students are performing was also yet another point of discussion that the great majority of teachers' response i.e. 14(64%) found to be great extent whereas the remaining eight teachers were distributed over neutral, less extent, and least extent responses.

The provision of feedback on time as a means of continuously assessing students' performance was scarcely understood by teachers as one of their professional obligations. To be sure, teachers were still mismatching Continuous assessment results to course objectives. This creates poor alignment not only between CA and course objectives but also feedback, and students' activities as well. Studies indicate that a good timely feedback is descriptive of the students' work (USAID 2008:38). However, the results did not support that the provision of feedback in a way that describes to students strengths, improvements needed and ways of improving. This could be due the above mentioned reasons such as lacks of adequate practice of CA. Studies recommended that teachers should provide students with frequent feedback and reinforcement for their academic performance provided that feedback includes the standard against which performance was judged, how the student's performance compares with that standard, and specifically how the performance can be improved (AED, 2008). Similarly, Fauzia, Negussi, Chinyere and Netsanet (2007) confirmed that feedback should be provided frequently, as soon after performance as possible, and should focus on the quality of performance rather than the student's intentions or effort. In spite of what has been said before, the provision of feedback at Aysaita College has been a problem to the very great extent. Moreover, challenges of CA particularly related with students were also identified (see table 4 below).

Table 4. Challenges teachers face from their students side while trying to use CA

No	Rating Scale items	Frequency of Response percentage				
		VGE	GE	NE	LE	LEAE
	Challenges you face from your students side while trying to use CA					
17	Carelessness of students (Copying ,cheating)	8(36.4)	9(40.9)		5(22.7)	
18	Students understanding about CA	10(45.4)	12(54.6)			
19	Absenteeism	7(32.8)	8(36.4)		2(9)	5(22.7)

As depicted in table 4 challenges closely related with students' activities in the implementation of CA are listed. Accordingly, the lesser students understand implementation of CA, the harder the challenges become. In this case, 99% of teacher educators agreed that poor students understanding about CA as the most challenging factors they have encountered. This was followed by carelessness and absenteeism of students. Carelessness of students particularly, copying, and cheating activities were seriously threatening factors as in indicated by 77% respondents. Besides, it has been found that around 69% of respondents replied students' absenteeism was one of threatening challenges where the improper implementation of CA can be projected. This is supported

Therefore from the above investigation, **table 4**, it is possible to justify that carelessness of students; students understanding about CA and students' absenteeism are some of the factors that teacher educators attributed. Besides, as it can be seen from **table 5**, the classroom environment was also identified as sources of the challenges in implementing CA. Apparently results obtained from Challenges teachers face from their students' side while trying to use CA revealed that lack

of appropriate teaching materials; large class size; intervention of authoritative rules of the colleges; lack of fixed school entry and exit schedule; absence of common guide line on CA and course overloads were among the challenges in implementing CA (for more details see table 5 below).

Table 5. Challenges of CA in relation with classroom environment.

	Challenges of CA implementation related with Classroom environment	VGE	GE	NE	LE	LEAE
20	Lack of appropriate teaching materials	9[40.9]	11[50]	2[9]		
21	Large class size	10[45.5]	12[54.6]			
22	Intervention of authoritative rules of the colleges	3[13.6]	5[22.7]	4[18]	6[27.3]	4[18]
23	Lack of fixed school entry and exit schedule	7[32.8]	9[40.9]		2[9]	4[18]
24	Absence of common guide line on CA	10[45.5]	11[50]		1[4.5]	
25	Course overloads	8[36.4]	10[45.5]	2[9]	2[9]	

As it can be seen in table 5 various reasons were given for being challenges in the process of implementation of CA with a specific focus on classroom environment. Although scholars suggest that lack of resources can be maximized by the use of resources through creative management and redistribution of limited resources as are available; around 90% of respondents announced lack of appropriate teaching material is a very great set back in the application of CA. In addition to lack of teaching appropriate, complete absence of fixed school entry and exit schedule throughout the academic year, is yet another problems of Aysaita College particularly in the process of proper implementation of CA. Traditionally, Aysaita College uses September month as entry season and June as exit month. However, this is characterized by delayed beginning and prolonged closing period due to administrative problems. In relation to this, around 73% teacher educators responded that irregular entry and exit schedule of Aysaita College leaves its impact in the implementation of CA.

The great majority of the teacher educators voiced that for all improper implementations of CA to happen they blamed the absence of common guideline. This is followed by the course over loads that teacher educators are teaching and managing.

Generally based on the data reported in *table 5*, it is possible to conclude that large class size, the absence of common guideline on CA, lack of fixed entry and exit schedule are becoming obstacles and negatively influence teachers to conduct their assessment effectively.

Accordingly they reported that the absence of common guide line, shortage of material, large class size, unpreparedness of teachers and students to implement CA, the resistance and interest made by some students who wants to pass grades with minimum effort and shortage of time were some of the problems cited by teachers as hindrance of CA.

Some teacher educators state that there are a large number of students in a class. Besides a teacher educator is required to teach about 400 students in a semester. I feel it is very difficult, in a situation like this, for teacher educators to continuously assess individual dents' performance

and give detailed comments. As stated above, large class size and the number of students a teacher educator teaches in a semester are perceived as one of the major challenges of implementing effective CA. More over another teacher educator expresses this sentiment about the structural constraints to implementing CA as follows ; Teacher educators often teach more than one course in more than one level of study (i.e. years 1,2,3...).In addition to this, teacher educators have additional responsibility of supervising practicum [teaching practice] in the field while classes are going on at college. All these prevent teacher educators from implementing CA.

Analysis of the data obtained through interview revealed that majority of the teacher educators respond that class size, students' interest, students' lack of awareness while teachers try to implement the CA, the problem of using continuous assessment for the purpose of summative assessment and similarly "One teacher educators said that, the students' low level of understanding and perceptions about CA would be some of the challenges that affect the implementation of CA.

This indicated that most teacher-educators assess their students' performance to meet the official requirements of the college. In relation to this, one teacher-educator clearly states: Nearly at the end of the semester, teacher educators are required to keep and submit a record of students' achievement in the course. To do this, teacher-educators mostly invite students to talk about some general topics and give marks based on their subjective judgment. Furthermore, interview results indicated that delayed feedbacks for essay works in some departments are common. Studies indicated that how important providing a feedback to students is. Unlike that the provision of feedback at Aysaita College was not given on time. Consequently, CA is scarcely implemented without the provision of feedback on time. In addition to the above ideas, supplementary results were also extracted from the classroom observations that strengthen the existence of some problems to use CA in the teaching learning process. Observation of the researcher witnessed that the physical condition of the classroom was filled with limited seating capacity as the classroom is filled with a few chairs and desks students were forced to import chairs from other idle classrooms somewhere else.

Most importantly, it is interesting to note that results obtained from teachers and students have similarity about challenges of CA. Similar to teachers, students describe such challenges as: lack of opportunities of using tests and examinations as a means of improving the teaching and learning process; difficulty of receiving on time feedback and difficulty of getting their written assignments checked by the teacher educators; the problem of using peer assessment, group assessment, pair work, self assessment, project work, Portfolio and etc as a means of improving the teaching learning process.

4.3. Suggested Approach to Solve Challenges of CA

The teacher educator respondents were asked to give their possible suggestion on how to improve the implementation of CA. Accordingly, the following list of possible solutions were suggested by majorities of teacher educators:-

- There should be proper follow up and supervision system to check the implementation of CA at the college level.
- Teachers and students should be motivated to implement CA as they are the vital of this task.
- Check list should be prepared to continuously record the students' academic progress.
- Preparing the appropriate format to improve CA
- Creating awareness about CA to teachers and students
- Decreasing the number of students per class, and
- Fulfilling the required material that are needed to implement CA are some of the mechanisms which alleviate the problems related to the implementation of CA.

The above suggested solutions of teacher educators were not uncommon in the history of CA, nor are they special solutions suggested by teachers of Aysaita College for the first time. In previously conducted research studies similar ideas are suggested. To be sure, Cruickshank (1995) recommended several possible solutions to the problems of CA that go hand in hand with the above listed ones. Similarly, some of solutions HDP (2008) provided to the problems of CA implementation include to make sure that teachers create appropriate opportunities for students to discuss the continuous-assessment program with themselves and any other members of staff involved, both before they embark on the program and during the program itself. In another word, this is more similar with creating awareness about CA to teachers and students as it is mentioned above.

Similarly, student respondents were also asked to give their possible suggestion or solutions to the problems they have faced. Accordingly the following lists of possible solutions were suggested;

- * Teachers' course load should be minimized
- * Number students per class should be minimized
- * Appropriate teaching materials that are needed to implement CA should be fulfilled
- * Common guide line should be prepared by the institution
- * Students should be motivated

Results extracted from the focus group discussion revealed that students have sensed the problems of CA in their teaching and learning process.

Following this students were also asked to give their possible suggestion to the solutions (to improve the implementation of CA) as a result almost all student teachers reflected the following ideas from the focus group discussion.

- * Decreasing the number of students in the class
- * Special emphasis should be given to CA in the college
- * Creating awareness about CA to students
- * There should be proper follow up to check the implementation of CA

The students have suggested no lesser value than their teachers perhaps even, most importantly, from FGD results students suggested indispensable solutions as a means of simplifying the challenges encountered in implementing CA. Besides, it is interesting to note that there is great similarity between teacher educators' and students suggestions about solutions for the challenges of CA.

5. Conclusion

The intention of this study was to find out the challenges in implementing CA approach in Aysaita College of Teachers Education. More over it was intended to make a general survey on teacher educators and student teachers perception of Continuous assessment. To answer these broad and specific research questions, the study was conducted with 22 teacher educators and 57 student teachers at Aysaita College of Teachers Education. The results obtained from the questionnaire administered to both teacher educators and student teachers reveal that the subjects of the study generally perceive continuous assessment as useful educational tools for improving learning and guiding teaching. The researcher employed descriptive survey method, 57 students and 22 teachers totally 79 sample subjects were taken as source of information .The data were gathered mainly through questionnaire, interview from the respondents. The data obtained were analyzed in percentages.

Based on the analysis of the data the following findings were obtained from the study. Speaking generally, challenges of implementing CA received 68% of very great extent, 9% neutrality and 23% of least extent from teacher educators. The following table explains the same thing.

Table 6: Teacher Educators' View on challenges of implementing CA

Categories	Responses of teacher educators in number and percentage	
	No.	%
To a very great extent	121	
34		
To great extent	121	
34		
To neutral extent	30	
09		
To less extent	52	
15		
To the least extent	28	08
Total	352	
100		

The findings from questionnaire, observation, interview and focus group discussion revealed that lack of awareness; knowledge and attitude towards CA coupled with large class size are still major challenges confronting teaching and learning process at Aysaita College.

* The awareness of teachers and students regarding the implementation of CA in the college was not satisfactory. Most of the teacher educators perceived that students were not able to make an assessment of their own progress in the process of CA.

* Some of the factors that contribute to the negative attitude of CA by the concerned bodies were lack of information, how to use CA, perception of CA as a complex process, a large class size, shortage of tome and poor practice of assessment techniques. Briefly speaking, teacher educators' misconception on CA and their traditional beliefs on some aspects CA were the main challenges.

* Teacher and students showed negative attitude towards the implementation of CA.

As indicated in the findings, the great majority of teacher educators focused on summative CA than formative CA. more plainly, they focused not on learning progress and improvements but rather using a trend of paper and pencil tests for the judgment (grading) purpose. This clearly indicates that teacher educators were not giving attention for students' progress so that this is so much far away from the practice of CA.

CA at Aysaita teachers College was scarcely implemented. For one thing, teacher educators most of the time use traditional assessment techniques that is for grading purpose. As a result CA did not bring the intended out come in the college.

5.1. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are recommended. More over, the suggestions presented here are generally based on results and findings from the close ended, interview, open ended questions and focused group discussion.

1. For the effective implementation of CA both teacher and students have to be aware of the need and purpose of CA.
2. Since teachers have no good perceptions of assessment practice in the application of CA practice, therefore they should be encouraged and supported by training. More specifically, training should emphasize on:
 - * When and how to use CA
 - * Why to use CA
 - *who must use CA
 - *How to simplify the challenges of CA in the implementation process in the classroom
3. One of the reasons why most teachers did not implement CA properly was because of absence of common guide line on CA, therefore the regional education bureau and the institution should prepare common guide line.
4. It is better that the institution should prepare trainings and workshops for the teachers then the different techniques of CA could be better understood by teachers. Thus, at College level there should be CA strengthening unit to follow up and monitor its implementation as well as to facilitate the flow of experience among teacher educators and their students. This can be coordinated simply, by dean of Aysaita Teachers College together with teacher educators.
5. The result of the study reveal that teacher educators do not make effective use of CA because of confusions about an assessment task, not knowing the kind of assessment given clearly. So teacher educators should have the opportunity to develop their knowledge of CA through personal reading, internet, conducting small scale action research and workshops.
6. Actions should be taken to reduce some of the structural constraints to effective CA. Different ways should be found to reduce class size, the number of students a teacher educator teaches in a semester, minimize teachers' course load, the number of classes the teacher educator teaches and providing special support for students with very poor understanding
7. In order to overcome the problems of large class size teacher educators and regional education offices should recruit students based on the capacity of the college for effective implementation of CA

8. Furthermore, the researcher would like to recommend others who are interested on similar topic at hand to simplify the problems of implementing CA in teaching and learning process particularly at teacher training institutions.

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