

**The State of Continuous Assessment Practices in Secondary Schools of Oromia
Special Zone: Challenges and Prospects**

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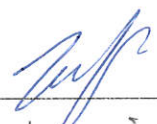
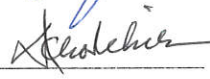
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Abstract

The State of Continuous Assessment Practices in Secondary Schools of Oromia Special Zone: Challenges and Prospects

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Addis Ababa University, 2012

The Purpose of this study was to investigate the State of Continuous Assessment Practices in secondary schools of Oromia Special Zone Surrounding Finfinne. For this study, mixed method and descriptive survey research was employed; both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through questionnaire, interviews and documents. Of the total sample size of the two study groups, 63 (87.5%) of the teachers and 197(89.95%) of students filled in and returned the questionnaire. In addition, five school principals and five secondary school supervisors were interviewed. The collected data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and chi-squares. Some of the major findings were: Most teachers had incomplete understanding about continuous assessment in that they concentrated on summative components of assessment; they didn't include a variety of continuous assessment tools in their plan and did not use in the class room activities. Thus, the practice of continuous assessment is low. Moreover, it was found that most of the teachers considered continuous assessment as a series of paper and pencil test activities to measure students' performance. Most teachers see continuous assessment as tiresome and more time consuming. Regarding continuous assessment guideline, almost the majority of teachers replied that there was no continuous assessment guideline to measure practical skills. There was a great difference among schools in practicing continuous assessment from planning up to implementation. Thus, to improve the situation, it is recommended that: Preparing manuals and guidelines for the front line practitioners and efforts should be made to create awareness continuously for students, teachers, school principals and educational experts. Conducting training and different workshop with those concerned bodies is more advisable to increase the understanding in the area. Teachers are expected to plan and involve students by providing tasks in the continuous form.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Education, in its broader sense, is any act or experience that has a formative effect on mind, character or physical of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another (Wikipedia, 2011). Assessment is one of the major educational activities. Assessment plays a significant role in the educational development of a person and, of course, a nation. It can be defined as the process of gathering data and fashioning them into interpretable form for decision making. It involves collecting data with a view to make value judgment about the quality of the person, object, group or event (Ajuonuma, 2006).

Assessment is very vital in helping the learner become effective. It is a collection of different strategies which enables students become competent in their learning. According to different scholars in the field of education, without assessment it is difficult to pinpoint a students' achievement or their failure to achieve their learning. This makes students learning less rewarding. In this connection, Airssian (1991), cited in ICDR, (1999) described that assessment is the process of collecting, interpreting and synthesizing information to help teachers understand their pupils, plan and monitor instruction and establish conducive classroom atmosphere.

The benefits of assessing students continuously and using in different strategies rather than giving explanation is further stated by Mulu (2005), as a onetime final examination or test does not bring a complete or true picture of students' performance including the higher order thinking skills. Therefore, it is very important to assess learners regularly and continuously to prove their achievement and performance in different aspects of their learning instead of simply giving tests and examination, which cannot assess the entire complex learning outcomes.

Nowadays, scholars believe that students can learn best and become effective if continuous assessment is effectively implemented in the teaching learning process. That is why advanced nations such as England, Spain, Australia and others are applying continuous assessment partially or wholly in their education system (Heaton, 1990).

Similarly, the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy(1994:9) states that, "Continuous assessment in academic practical subjects including aptitude tests will be conducted to ascertain the formation of all rounded profile of students at all level." Thus, the Ethiopian teachers' education system, there have been continual changes in the curriculum and teachers' profile since the 1994 education reform of the country. At present, the teacher education program is guided by the TDP (Teacher Development Program) document which is guided by a new view of education that promotes continuous assessment (ICDR, 1999). The document also states that in the teacher education, traditional way of assessing students like giving only final exams has to be replaced by continuous assessment that develops and inculcates higher order thinking skills at different levels of the education system, which is a paradigm shift.

Accordingly, few studies have been conducted on continuous assessment at colleges and high school levels. Birhanu (2004) conducted a research on teachers' assessment of student performance with an emphasis on continuous assessment at high school level. Besides, Desalegn (2001) carried out an evaluative research on the adequacy of the syllabus of teachers training institutes in preparing trainees to implement continuous assessment in the first cycle primary school. Moreover, Selamneh (2011) conducted a research on practice and challenges of continuous assessment for instructional improvement at college level. However, less attention has been given to the practices and challenges of continuous assessment in Oromia Special Zone high school. Livingston (2001: 129-130) have also noted the following:

Employing continuous assessment enables the teacher to assess more of intended behavior of the student and to take note of factors such as their active participation, how articulate they are, their relationships with others and their motivation that have educational relevance.

So it is the must to include continuous assessment in the plan properly and implement for the purpose of assessing students' performance in order to shape the learning.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Assessing students in the teaching learning process has a lot of benefits. It can expose learners to experience creative reflections through which the teacher probes their understanding to elicit answers for the questions he or she poses. Concerning this, Elington and Early (1997) said that continuous assessment is carried out on an ongoing basis while students are actually working their way through a course. Similarly, Farant (1980) states that continuous assessment is practiced on day to day basis to judge the quality of individual work or performance.

Students do not learn much just by sitting in a class, listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged items and spitting out answers. They need to be continuously assessed by their teachers while learning is on progress. Continuous assessment is a students' evaluation system that operates at a classroom level and is integrated with the instructional process. It is important to determine the relationship between what is attended and what is achieved (Crzone 1990). Likewise, Mkhonta (2003) explains that continuous assessment is an essential component of the instructional process that uses the "assessment feedback-correction" learning cycle that is missing from the time limited examinations.

Recognizing the importance of continuous assessment, the MoE has introduced it at different levels of the education system. As stated in the 1994 Education and Training Policy, the practical task of implementing the new curriculum at different educational levels (primary, secondary and university) requires continuous assessment as part of the curriculum in general and instructional process in particular. To realize this, the role of teachers and students has paramount importance. This means that teachers and students should be well informed and have awareness about the concept and procedures of practicing continuous assessment before they are made to implement it. In line with this, Teshome (2001) suggested that teachers' knowledge and attitude should be considered for effective implementation of the assessment program. William and Burdon (1997) also strengthen this contention and pointed out that teachers' actions are highly influenced by their knowledge. This implies the need for attention to be given to the practice of

continuous assessment and the challenges teachers face in implementing the program at high school level.

Besides from the observation and experience of the researcher, most teachers seem to lack clear understanding of the concept of continuous assessment. A teacher for instance, might interpret continuous assessment as continuous testing. This wrong conceptualization of the term will even affect the need to employ variety techniques to assess learners' progress. It is worthwhile, therefore, on the part of the investigator to look into the state of continuous assessment practice and the challenges teachers face at Oromia Special Zone.

Research Questions

This study was designed to examine the status, conditions for the practices of continuous assessment, the factors that hinder or facilitate the practice and mechanisms to improve the current practices of continuous assessment in secondary school. In line with this, the study generally focuses to answer, how and under what circumstance is continuous assessment practiced? More specifically, the following questions were addressed in this study:

1. What is the state of continuous assessment practices in secondary schools of Oromia special Zone?
2. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder the effective practices of continuous assessment in secondary schools of Oromia Special Zone?
3. What should be done to improve the current practices of continuous assessment in secondary schools?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the status of the current practices of continuous assessment and the factors that facilitate or hinder the practices in the Secondary Schools of Oromia Special Zone.

More specifically, this study is aimed at:

1. Examining the state of continuous assessment practices in secondary schools of Oromia Special Zone.
2. Exploring those factors that facilitate or hinder the effective practices of continuous assessment in secondary schools of Oromia Special Zone.
3. Providing a solution to improve the current practices of continuous assessment in secondary schools.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

The findings of this study are important for different concerned educational partners that are found at various levels. These are: policy makers, school administrators, teachers and the school community. Therefore, the study provides information to higher officials and policy makers about the current status of continuous assessment and the areas to be considered in the process of making policy decisions. This study also gives information to school principals on how continuous assessment is being carried out in the secondary schools and the mechanisms to make improvements in the area. Moreover, the study creates awareness among WEO about the existing problems and to take shared responsibility for the implementation of continuous assessment. Furthermore, it suggests alternative solutions to be used by teachers, students and principals to minimize the problems in the implementation of continuous assessment. Finally, the study could be used as an additional source of information for further studies.

1.5 Delimitation

This research would be more conclusive if it has been carried out at regional level. However, because of financial problem and time constraint, it is limited to the study of practices and challenges in implementing continuous assessment in five selected secondary schools out of fourteen (14) secondary schools in Oromia Special Zone. Moreover, the study is delimited to assess the state of practices and challenges in implementing continuous assessment.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

The potential problem faced in the research process was unwillingness of a few respondents to fill in the questionnaire and return back on time; and the shortage of time to collect the data were the constraints which encountered the researcher. However, the researcher appoints the respondents frequently and showing the commitment to complete this study successfully.

1.7. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Continuous assessment: assessment done formally and informally on a regular and continuous basis. It is integrated with instruction to improve, help, shape and direct the teaching learning process.

State of continuous assessment: it shows the degree to which the continuous assessment activity implemented in schools.

Continuous assessment practices: the overall efforts made in the implementation of continuous assessment or any activity that was made in relation to continuous assessment implementation.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK OF THE STUDY

This chapter deals with the review and presentation of related literature which includes concept of classroom assessment, meaning and nature of continuous assessment, assessment paradigms, purpose of assessment, basic requirements for assessment, principle of good assessment, theoretical and educational foundation of continuous assessment, characteristics of continuous assessment and research findings on continuous assessment. Finally, the conceptual model of the study is presented based on the review of literature.

2.1. The Concept of Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessment might be conceptualized in different ways by different scholars. It is the processes where the teacher and student are try to improve the teaching learning activity in order to achieve the objective of the instruction. According to Angela and Cross (1993), classroom assessment is both a teaching approach and a set of assessment techniques which refers to all the activities undertaken by teachers and by their pupil assessing themselves. It provides information which serves as a feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. Classroom assessment can also be defined as a process of gathering evidences of what pupil know, understand and able to do (Bc-Home, 2008).

Recently, educators advocate that the assessment going on at the classroom level should aimed at high stake tests, because the former operates in the context in which instruction is going on, is better to monitor and guide the teaching learning process so as to continuously improve teaching learning (USAID/BEP, 2006). Besides, unlike nation or region wide tests in the form of high stake tests, assessment that takes place at the classroom level focuses not only on assessment of learning but also on assessment for learning (Nitko, 2004). In a similar way Hassen, (1998) stated that classroom assessment has a much more potential to provide immediate diagnostic and formulate feedback better than the summative. In the emerging view, therefore, the main purpose of classroom assessment is to guide pupils' learning.

Classroom assessment, it offers a mechanism on how curriculum, instructional activities and assessment impact pupils' effort and achievement and provides appropriate information about the progress and competency of pupils to stakeholders (BrookHart, 1997; Hassen, 1998; USAID/BEP, 2006). Hence, it is recommended that inculcating the new approaches to assessment is vital to improve instruction and help educational stakeholders benefit from the practice at high level. Realizing this fact, Hassen (1998) pointed out that classroom assessment has now become the most crucial, frequent and pervasive issue in educational systems to determine the quality of learning; how pupils know, how efficiently they perform and what attitudes they have developed for future learning.

Classroom assessment as explained above is usually carried out by teachers to improve pupils' learning and teachers' instruction on the basis of impressions gained through a variety of assessment techniques they employ. However, this part of educational assessment is the most difficult aspect of teaching. Because judging pupils' work with respect to the different educational domains is difficult since it is a continuous process that demands teachers' knowledge, skills, time and energy.

The above discussion indicate that classroom assessment is carried out by teachers on continuous basis while teaching and learning is going on and it is vital to improve pupils' learning and teachers' teaching. When classroom assessment has such features, it is termed as continuous assessment.

2.2. Meaning and Nature of Continuous Assessment

It is helpful that understanding the meaning and nature of continuous assessment before going through the study. The meaning and nature of continuous assessment is discussed as follows.

2.2.1. Meaning

Continuous Assessment is a classroom strategy implemented by teachers to ascertain the knowledge, understanding and skills attained by students (USAID, 2003). USAID in its Education Quality Review news letter explained that teachers make an assessment in a variety of ways over time to allow them to observe tasks and to collect information about what students know, understand and can do. These assessments are curriculum based

tasks previously taught in the class. Continuous assessment occurs frequently during the school year and is a part of regular teacher pupil interactions. Pupils receive feedback from teachers on their performance that allows them to focus on topics they have not yet mastered.

The other definition given by the Ministry of basic Education and Culture of Namibia (1999) showed that when both formal and informal assessments are done on a regular and continuous basis, they are referred to as continuous assessment. Continuous assessment is meant to be integrated with teaching in order to improve learning and help, shape, and direct teaching learning process.

According to the ministry of basic education and culture of Namibia, the assessment is continuous because it occurs at continuous, following a lesson, usually occurs following a topic and frequently occurs following a theme.

Another definition by Alause, (1999) indicated that continuous assessment should involve a formal assessment of learner's effective characteristics and motivation in which they will need to demonstrate their commitment to task over time, their work force readiness and their competence in team or group performance contexts. Furthermore, continuous assessment is a way of collecting information about learners on regular basis in order to improve the teaching learning process (Puhl, 1997). Continuous assessment is the process of gathering information to make decision about the learner, based on what they know and can demonstrate as a result of instruction (Pasigna, 2003).

According to Mkhonta (2003), continuous assessment is a way of finding out what pupils' know, understand and can do so as to improve learning. In the same manner, Curzon (1990) stated that continuous assessment is a comprehensive term, which refers, particularly, to inquiring into the learners' competence, knowledge, attitude and skills through visions, students' profile using different assessment method to improve learning. From the above definitions one could infer that continuous assessment is an assessment approach that involves the use of variety of assessment instruments for assessing the learning and teaching process to improve students' learning.

2.2.2 Nature of Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment, by its nature is systematic, comprehensive and cumulative, and guidance oriented activity and that its effective implementation needs to fulfill these peculiar features (Adebowale et al 2008; Eggen and Kauchak, Hounsell, et, al 1996, cited in Birhanu 2004). In terms of comprehensiveness, continuous assessment practice requires the use of varied approaches and assessment tools stated otherwise, teachers by using continuous assessment can address behavioral domains which could not be assessed by terminal based assessments. In view of this, ICDR (2004) has listed the following areas which continuous assessment can address:

- Assessing achievements in various subjects using real exams and different written tests.
- Assign school related behavioral aspects, such as participation in the instruction process, extracurricular activities and fulfillment of assessments discipline and punctuality.
- Assessing general behavioral aspects like characteristics, interests, beliefs and attitudes.

Comprehensiveness is not only in terms of the behavioral domains measured but also in terms of the assessment tools teachers use to assess those areas.

According to Freedman (1998), continuous assessment, other than tests or examinations must include varied assessment tools such as projects, presentation, interviews, observations, oral questions, home works, seat works and similar other kinds.

Therefore, comprehensiveness in assessment is meant addressing multiple learning styles, variety in semester and weekly projects and variety in the thinking skills and inquires. Hence, pupils' marks could then be a profile of many areas of competence rather than concentrating on a single behavioral domain (Ali, 1988)

The cumulative nature of continuous assessment is related with decision making. This means in order to make dependable and reasonably accurate decisions, teachers must depend on variety of evidences collected using instruments at different times. In support of this, Suskiel (2004), prescribed teachers to collect enough evidence to get

representative sample of what their pupils have learned and can do. The justification is that a complete picture of pupils' performance could be known only when teachers put together enough pieces of evidence.

Assessment is not an end by itself but the means to an end (Grunlund, 1981; Lin and Nitko 2004), the guidance nature of continuous assessment is driven from this general principles of measurement and evaluation. Continuous assessment mainly focuses on monitoring and guiding pupils' progress throughout the content of the subject material taught.

In the nature of continuous assessment, systematic planning is a mile stone of continuous assessment practice. Planning continuous assessment ensures whether or not the proposed assessment scheme is progressive and properly integrated and that the different assessment vehicles are properly matched to the objectives and learning out comes that they intended to assess. These integrated natures of continuous assessment are put together by Adebowale *as follow*:

Continuous assessment is a systematic in that it requires an operational plan it is also cumulative in nature in that only decision making about a learner is based on earlier decisions and is guidance oriented in that only data gathered on pupils will serve as the basis for further academic growth and development (2008:5).

So teachers are expected to plan the assessment activity with variety of techniques and methods in order to have a complete picture or performance level of their students.

Therefore, teachers said that continuous assessment implementation is sound only when the actual practice suits with what the theory states.

2.2.3. Assessment Paradigms

The current literature suggests that there are four assessment paradigms to classroom assessment that can be used in conjunction with each other "assessment of learning", "assessment for learning", "assessment as learning", and "Assessment in Learning"

Assessment of Learning

Most commonly, assessment is defined as a process whereby someone attempts to describe and quantify the knowledge, attitudes or skills possessed by another. Teacher directedness is paramount and the student has little involvement in the design or implement of the assessment process in these circumstances: Teacher designs learning and collect evidences to judge what has been learnt and what has not.

Assessment for Learning

The assessment for learning involves increased levels of student autonomy, but not without teacher guidance and collaboration. The assessment for learning is sometimes seen as being a kin to 'formative assessment' and can be seen as informing teaching. There is more emphasis towards giving of useful advice to the student and less emphasis on the giving of marks and the grading function: Teacher designs learning and design assessment with feedback to students concerning students learning.

Assessment as Learning

'Assessment as learning' is perhaps more connected with diagnostic assessment and can be constructed with more of an emphasis on informing learning. Assessment as learning generates opportunities for self assessment and for peer assessment. Students take an increased responsibility to generate quality information about their learning and that of others. Teacher and student co-construct learning, assessment and learning progress map. Assessment for learning and assessment as learning activities should be deeply embedded in teaching and learning and be the source of interactive feedback, allowing students to adjust, rethink and re-learn.

Assessment in Learning

The assessment in learning places the question at the centre of teaching and learning. It deflects the teaching from its focus on a 'correct answer' to focus on 'a fertile question'. Through the inquiry, students engage in processes that generate feedback about their learning, which come from multiple sources, and activities. It contributes to the construction of other learning activities, lines of enquiry and the generation of other

questions: Students are at the centre of learning, monitors, assesses and reflects on learning and initiates demonstration of learning (to self and others). Teacher plays a role as coach and mentor.

Teachers and students need to understand the purpose of each assessment strategy so that the overall assessment 'package' being used by learners and teachers accurately captures, generates and uses meaningful learning information to generate deep learning and understanding.

2.2.4 Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of assessment is many. It serves to see whether the teaching learning carried out in schools achieve its objective or not. According to Namibia Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, Teachers' Manual on Formative Assessment in Science Class (2010), the following purposes of assessment was suggested.

To ascertain what learning, change and progress takes place in the child over a period of time in different subjects of study and other aspects of the child's personality, to find out the needs and learning style of every learner and to devise a teaching-learning plan that is responsive to the individual needs and learning styles. Further, it helps to improve the teaching-learning materials by adding value and help every learner find out their interests, aptitudes, strengths and weaknesses so that the learner can evolve effective learning strategies, to measure the extent to which curricular objectives have been realized and to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process.

In general the purpose of continuous assessment circles around improving teaching-learning activity, addressing students interest in the course of learning and create an opportunity for both teachers and students to work for the same purpose-improving students learning. So, in order to make assessment activity fruitful, prior to the implementation teachers are expected to suit their assessment activity to serve the above listed purpose.

2.2.5 Basic Requirements for Assessment

In order to achieve the purpose that the assessment serves in the teaching learning activity, one should follow the basic requirement of the assessment in the process of

planning and implementing the assessment activity. The following pre-condition need to be met to make an effective and appropriate assessment (ICDR, 2004).

Assessment must be a planned activity. It should be planned how and when the assessment will be made. The teacher must be equipped with adequate knowledge and capacity about assessment techniques and the assessment should be based on the actual condition, time, place and social factors of the class, pupils' level of knowledge and the nature of instruction. Further variety of items and assessment techniques should be selected and applied, the items should be prepared in a clear, readable and precise language, and assessment should be well administered and its result must be recorded documented and also reported.

All continuous assessment activities which are exhibited in the process of teaching learning should have the precondition which makes the process successful. Planning the assessment activity why, when and how in its implementation has its own positive impact on the results of the assessment.

2.2.6 Principle of Good Assessment

Assessment practice has its own principles. Regarding this, Jorolimk and Paker (1997), &Ruddell (1997) suggested the following as principles of good assessment. These include:

Assessment should focus on learning. Its goals are to encourage, assist and enhance learning, not to punish student who perform poorly. Reward students who straggle to take risk for their learning. Teachers should treat assessment as an integral part of curriculum and instruction. If assessment is to facilitate students learning, it must be woven in to the fabric of curriculum and instruction. It must be done before, during and after instruction. It should reduce competition and increase cooperation in the classroom. This is against the commonly held belief of traditional and pencil test systems. Many researchers have opposed this view. They say it has negative impact on learning. The purpose of assessment is to find out how well and in what ways students are able to do what they want to do. Thus cooperation among the student is needed. Assessment should build feeling of self worth and competence. Assess students' performance in authentic tasks.

Assessment should be aimed at looking in to students' ability to apply knowledge and skills successfully in meaningful or authentic tasks which show their ability to use what has been learned.

Moreover, it should be equitable. Assessment procedures are fair, just and impartial. There is no bias in terms of race, gender, abilities, culture, economic status or economic background and provide ample opportunities to learn. Before students are to be assessed, they should be given ample opportunities for their learning and finally, it should include consistent and meaningful reporting.

2.3 Theoretical and Educational Foundation of Continuous Assessment

The theoretical foundation of continuous assessment lies on Piaget's and Vygotsky's (1969) learning theories.

Piaget believed individuals must adapt to their environment. He described two processes for adaptation which is an organism's ability to fit in with its environment, assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process of using or transforming the environment so that it can be placed in preexisting cognitive structures.

Accommodation is the process of changing cognitive structures in order to accept something from the environment. It changes the schema, so it can increase its efficiency. By using Piaget's theory in the classroom, teachers and students benefit in several ways. Teachers develop a better understanding of their students' thinking. They can also align their teaching strategies with their students' cognitive level (e.g. motivational set, modeling, and assignments). Their goal is to help the individual construct knowledge. Conservation of constancy, as defined by Garner (2008:34), "is the ability to understand how some characteristics of a thing can change, while others stay the same".

In other words, it is the realization that even though an object can be changed physically, some of the characteristics for that object remain the same. For instance, if you give students modeling clay and tell them to mold it, the shape will change, but the color of the modeling clay will remain the same. Conservation of constancy "identifies

relationships and makes sense of physical and abstract information” (Garner, 2008:47). Educators create, implement, and assess the curriculum being taught, assuming throughout the process that students can conserve constancies. If students lack this ability, they will not benefit academically because they have limited concrete sensory data and literal interpretations. Thus, they will experience difficulty in thinking abstractly, problem-solving, planning, and discerning relevance (Garner, 2008: 35). For example, if the student is studying fractions, he or she may not be able to recognize that one-third and three-ninths are equal.

In order for students to develop their conservation of constancy skills, teachers must provide their students with opportunities to recognize similarities and differences at both the physical and abstract. Visualization and reflective awareness are crucial to students’ understanding of conservation of constancy. By encouraging students to notice similarities and differences in objects, they increase their conservation of constancy.

According to Vygotsky’s Theory, Social interaction plays an important role in student learning. It is through social interaction that students learn from each other, as well as adults. Vygotsky’s theory suggests that we learn first through person-to-person interactions and then individually through an internalization process that leads to deep understanding. Vygotsky explores three different types of speech: social, private, and internal. He refers to social speech as the instructions given by adults to children. Private speech allows children to process what the adult has said and try to apply it to similar situations. For example, a teacher tells the class to keep their hands to themselves. Self-control is an example of private speech because children are using for themselves the same language that adults use to regulate behavior. So, since their teacher has informed to keep their hands to themselves, the students do not hit or punch each other in class. Both teacher and student share the responsibility of developing students’ private speech. Internal or inner speech takes place “as the student’s silent, abbreviated dialogue that she carries on with self that is the essence of conscious mental activity”

Vygotsky's central topic was the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which uses social interaction with more knowledgeable others to move development forward. A more capable person, such as teacher or peer, provides assistance to the student; the student is able to complete the task with this assistance. Students, who are in the ZPD, need active teaching. Therefore, Vygotsky's theory promotes the belief, "What is learned must be taught." Teachers should be explaining, modeling, and using guided practice in the classroom. By modeling what they want their students to do, students will be better able to work through their assigned tasks.

Think-aloud, an instructional strategy that allows students to talk through new steps of an endeavor aloud can be used with upper elementary and middle school students, who are in the ZPD. This strategy assists students' thinking about how they make meaning. During think-aloud, students listen to a skilled reader using "strategies to comprehend text and their teachers' thinking become visible to them". Students need time to try out various strategies, so they can develop answers or responses. At the same time, teacher questioning techniques should guide the social interactions implicitly or explicitly. Think-aloud help teachers determine why and how students are experiencing difficulty in reading. In addition, students can analyze their own thinking about their reading.

Educationally, continuous assessment is based on the constructivist epistemology which assures knowledge as something produced through the meaningful interaction between the learner and the world around him/her (ICDR, 2004). This would be possible when pupils are made to actively involved in the entire system of the teaching learning process.

The insights from the learning theories and emerging educational philosophies led to a set of changes in the classroom assessment. One area of change is the assessment trolls and frequency of the assessment itself. Regarding this change (Liu cited in USAID/BEP, 2006) asserted that pupils don't need to acquire a vast amount of information, typically the focus on traditional assessment but rather the ability to think and organize the information for specific purpose. The implication is that assessment should move away from the narrow focus on simple tests to assessment methods that address the overall development of pupils. The other area of change is the form of regularly monitoring the

teaching learning process and using varied ways of assessment and providing frequent and constructive feedback on how learning is progressing rather than merely auditing learning (USAID/BEP, 2006).

Generally, the foundations that continuous assessment established itself on the contemporary development is cognitive and constructivist theory which in turn change educational practitioners' view of knowledge acquisition and competence.

2.4 Characteristics of Continuous Assessment

A more complete view of continuous assessment requires that a teacher understands information about students learning and should be used continuously during the teaching process to improve teaching and learning. Therefore, according to Jamaican Ministry of Education, youth and culture (2004), in effective classroom assessment mode, there are five features of continuous assessment.

- Continuous assessment encourages the use of multiple works. Assessment often occurs and for different purposes and is not limited to the end of term or end of year.
- Continuous assessment allows for timely feedback to the major stakeholders in the systems. When continuous assessment mode is used, the teacher can regularly monitor and report on the program that students are making to words the attainment targets and objectives set out in the official curriculum. If a teacher does not recognize a student's learning errors until the end of the term or the end of the year, it is usually too late for any corrective as well as its time lines significantly impact on how a student responds to it.
- The continuous assessment model makes it easier to use a variety of assessment methods. For example, a teacher can use a class discussion, oral questioning, a project, class work, assignments, and student's observation to help him gather different types of information he/she needs to plan, teach, decide and report. The validity of our decision is greatly improved when we use a variety of assessment methods for gathering and interpreting students' information.

- Continuous assessment gives opportunities for collaboration including students in the assessment process through self evaluation and for evaluations and asking for reflection on what they have learned motivates them.
- Continuous assessment occurs throughout the teaching learning process. A teacher who has more understanding of continuous assessment, required to realize that assessment information should be used through all the teaching-learning process. In other words, that assessment really must be continuous. If we divide the teaching process in to three stages, we can describe continuous assessment in each stage along with the main purpose of assessment.
 - a. Before instruction gather information about what students already know about the upcoming unit and what misconceptions they may have used this information to help plan the instruction and teaching activities for the unit.
 - b. During instruction gather information about how well students are learning thus for, use the information to decide which students are making good progress and which are struggling and use the information to guide change that should be made in the lesson plans or to guide remediation or re- teaching
 - c. After instruction gather information about how well students have learned the material that was taught, use the information to assign grades or re-teach students who have fallen defined.

In general, effective assessment helps to focus effort on implementing strategies to facilitate learning both inside and outside the classroom, and demonstrates the characteristics like: congruent with instruction, and integral to it, ongoing and continuous, based on authentic tasks and meaningful learning processes and contexts; based on criteria that students know and understand, appealing to their strengths; a collaborative process involving students; multi-dimensional, and uses a wide range of tools and methods; and focused on what students have learned and can do.

2.5. Rationales for Using Continuous Assessment

The conventional assessment focuses more on the end results that students get. Some scholars argue that although it is important to judge the achievement of students at the end of a semester or a course, assessment should mainly be used to improve the teaching learning process (Plessis et al 2003, Pasigna, 2002; Ellington and *et al*, 1997). Hence, then advocated a paradigm shift from conventional assessment to continuous assessment. The characteristic of this shift (a paradigm shift in educational assessment) is the moving of assessment from a judgmental roll to a development role. This move reflects evolving ideas on the nature of assessment and its purposes Puhl(1997:3).

The scholars present a number of rationales for using continuous assessment in schools. Continuous assessment is a way of collecting information about student's strength and weaknesses and provides important remediation in order to maximize their learning. Bock, Elago and Kunyanda (2003), point out the following rationales as to why continuous assessment is used in classrooms.

It is useful to diagnose learner strength and needs (so that appropriate teaching can be provided); to provide feedback to teachers about how well they are teaching (so that they can make needed changes and continue doing things that are effective); to inform and guide instruction (for example, to help a teacher decide if remedial teaching is needed by some learners or if the whole class needs more teaching on a topic), to inform learners how well they are learning (so they continue to do good work and so that they know when they need to improve); to make clear to learners what they are expected to learn ; to motivate and focus learners attention and effort (to help them learn better). More over it helps to evaluate and grade learner achievement; to provide a record of progress; to predict learner readiness for future learning and to ensure and improve the effectiveness of the school.

Generally, through continuous assessment of students' performance, it is possible to get regular information about teaching, learning and the achievement of learning objectives and competences. Moreover, teaching and learning is not a process that can be completed in a short period of time, so it needs an ongoing assessment.

2.6. Advantages and Drawbacks of Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment practices have its own merits and demerits. Knowing these helps to improve the practice when it is needed. The advantages and drawbacks of the continuous assessment practice were emphasized in relation to teachers and students as indicated below.

2.6.1. Advantages of Continuous Assessment

In the school activity continuous assessment have tremendous advantage for the learners and teachers as discussed below.

A. For learners

Research finding in different area, concluded that the following are uses of continuous assessment in developing ability of learners. These are it equip them to reflect on and use a variety of learning strategies and enhance lifelong learning, solve problems and make responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking, work with others as members of them (group) and deal with information critically. Further, it helps the learner to communicate effectively using visual mathematical and language skills and use science and safe choices for healthy living; appreciate the links between mental conceptions of knowledge and manual tasks informed by such knowledge and act in a way that reflects justice, democratic values, and respect for human dignity

B. For teachers

Continuous assessment as (Sitiggnns 1998; Osterhof 1999; Popham 1999 et. al concluded that it helps the teachers in the classroom by the following points. These are to find out what students know and can do; to gain confidence in what we say our students know and can do and it help teachers to provide all children with opportunity to show what they know and to promote learning for understanding. Moreover, to improve teaching and determine what kind of remediation and enrichment activities to provide and to identify with students need assistance.

2.6.2 Drawbacks of Continuous Assessment

Even though continuous assessment is a preferred way of assessing learning for some schools, it is not without some drawbacks which are discussed in details below. Learners who are assessed continuously may feel that they are always under surveillance for every mistake they commit (Nitko, 2005; Plessis, et al 2003). This may have a negative impact on the learners' performance. Continuous assessment may also bring a profound negative effect if it is not well planned and properly protected. Regarding this, Ellington and Early (1997:121) stated that:

Unless continuous assessment is carefully planned and coordinated, there is a very real danger that student may be grossly over assessed particular of certain times of the year, when several lectures are asking simultaneously for assignments to be handed in continuous assessment can, if not properly managed adversely and their tutors with the latter being regarded with suspicion and (Some extreme cases) enmity and occasionally even introducing mal practice, as in introducing penalties for seeking help.

So, unless continuous assessment is planned in an appropriate manner, it is difficult to achieve the basic objectives of practicing continuous assessment. In order to enhance the effectiveness of continuous assessment, it is important to minimize the drawbacks. Ellington and Early (1997) point out that teacher need to have a well developed knowledge and skills to be creative in their implementation at continuous assessment. Teachers should also have a well organized plan of assessment to maximize the success of continuous assessment, and the entire problem listed above can be overcome by carefully planning and good practice.

2.7 Research Findings on Continuous Assessment

Although researchers, specifically on continuous assessment are scarce in secondary schools, there are abundant researches on the implementation of continuous assessment in primary schools. A few will be discussed here to give a sense of the international and national context in relation to primary and secondary school levels.

2.7.1 International Research Findings on the Implementation of Continuous Assessment.

There were research findings on continuous assessment in different countries in different time. To have the necessary ground the researcher revises some of the findings based on its relatedness with the title under study. Hence, implementation of school based in Zambia, in Swaziland and Namibia were revised as follows.

A. The implementation of school based continuous assessment (CA) in Zambia

In Zambia, continuous assessment is defined as an ongoing diagnostic classroom based process that used a variety of assessment tools to measure learner performance over the years, examinations have been used.

To selection and certification without formal consideration on school based continuous assessment as a component in the final examinations of grade seven levels. The ministry of education introduced school based continuous assessment for two reasons: For certification and selection.

There has been an increasing criticism in the educational field on high stakes examination of having harmful effect on student learning and that it should be reduced to a minimum. Because formative assessment if properly implemented in schools is a powerful means to improve student learning. In the international scenarios, formative assessment has already been practiced in schools in various western countries including Australia Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Italy, Netherland and Scotland.

Challenges in implementing the school based continuous assessment

The findings from the timely monitoring visits that were conducted to the pilot schools related that the teachers encountered various challenges in implementing the formative school based assessment

The major challenges were: large class size, remediation and enrichment, pupils' absenteeism, teaching and learning resources, teacher net working and monitoring and feedback.

The major benefits are:

Continuous assessment offers a way to cater for a diversity of learners in a large class help to standardize the assessment procedure in the schools and enables for continuous in Service training; provision of different teaching and learning materials and help for proper record keeping and easily transferable etc.

B. Continuous assessment in Swaziland

The assessment of students learning in the classroom by teacher occupies a central role in the learning process. If handled properly by competent teachers, continuous assessment contributes largely to the superior achievement of students (Makhonta, 2003).

The rational for using continuous assessment, thus, was seen as a procedure to address: The deteriorating quality of education because the system was failing to meet the demands of high population growth; the ever increasing dropout and repetition rate and the nature of the Curriculum being abstract and its lack of connection to students every day experience.

According to Mkhonta (2003), the continuous assessment program in Swaziland was based on the principle of mastery of learning which can make every child become a successful learner in given time and opportunity.

In this case, there were many and varied assessment tests. A survey by the continuous assessment unit also revealed that a number of teachers made tests were shallow and merely tested recall, so it was decided that the continuous assessment unit should assist teachers by an item specification book specification booklet to guide them in setting good test item.

An evaluation report of the use of continuous assessment in schools in Swaziland based on interviews, class work, observation and inspection of written works led to the conclusion as follows.

Over 50% teachers were found to be teaching forward clearly defined objectives only a quarter of teachers used the item specification handbook when constructing their own tests. A majority (70%) did not understand how to draw illustrations, or because a

school did not have duplicating facilities. This was the case in most schools. Although there was provision of corrective activities, which offered student explicit, guidance and direction on how they can correct their learning errors and remedy learning problems very few teachers attempted to carry out remedial and enrichment activities yet this is a key element of mastery learning approaches. Those who did encountered difficulties relating to lack of time, class management, lack of materials and lack of "know how" the most commonly adapted strategy was to provide revision for the whole class. Again this is not occurred with recommendations in the use of mastery learning (Mangagula, 1995, Cited in Mkhonta, 2003:76).

So, it is possible to say from the above conclusion, continuous assessment practice in Swaziland is not in the position of bringing overall changes in the assessment activities. It requires a proper designing of continuous assessment practices.

A challenge for the Swaziland MDE and all stakeholders is design a continuous assessment program that will be compatible with and take into consideration the realities of the situation in Swaziland schools. Do to this end a number of studies and reports have been made as well as consultations geared toward finding lasting solutions to the problems that are associated with the implementation of continuous assessment program.

C. Continuous assessment at primary school level in Namibia

Finding strength and short comings regarding current assessment practice in Namibia was assessed as follows.

1. Achievements

Continuous assessment achievements in Namibia are summarized by Plessis. According to Plessis (2003), some of the achievements scored through the reform of assessment policy and practice include: The democratization of the monitoring and assessment exercise through which various stakeholder platforms have been created; numbers in service training initiatives to manpower the implementers. In fact, some implementers have become experts in handling the issues under discussions and initiatives to empower the learners through learner centered methodologies and so on.

2. Short comings

In assessment policy and procedures the reports by Directorate of national examination and assessment (DNEA, cited in Plessis (2003) should that short comings related to assessment include: Lack of understanding the policy guidelines by some implementers; lack of proper control and supervision mechanisms, especially at school and regional levels; inability of some teachers to understand how continuous assessment feedbacks can be used in classroom practice better and reluctance of learners to simply participate in or do continuous assessment tasks

Moreover, lack of commitment on the part of teachers and learners regarding continuous assessment, to conclude, the system appears to rest on well considered theoretical underpinnings. There seem, however, to be some major short coming at the practical implementation level. As such, the current assessment and monitoring procedures and practices done of seen to contribute to and inform classroom practice as optimally as originally intended.

2.7.2 National research Findings on the Implementation of Continuous Assessment.

From research findings to Ethiopia context, Birhanu (2004) indicated that proper handling of student assessment in general and continuous assessment in particular at high school level in selected high school in Arsi Zone is poor and not up to the standard compared to the contemporary assessment system. This finding further indicated that the major problem in implementing continuous assessment include lack of awareness about the technique and procedures, lack of guideline /directives in implementing continuous assessment, inadequate preparation of teachers on continuous assessment, lake of technical support, unmanageable large class size, lack of adequate learning materials, lack of adequate supervisions who can guide practitioners, lack of students motivation and learners negative attitude towards project and assignment. According to his study these were found to be practical problems in implementing continuous assessment in Arsi Zone high schools.

Derebsa (2003), also in his research findings on assessment techniques and the implementation of a Learner centered approach indicated that with the constant focus on

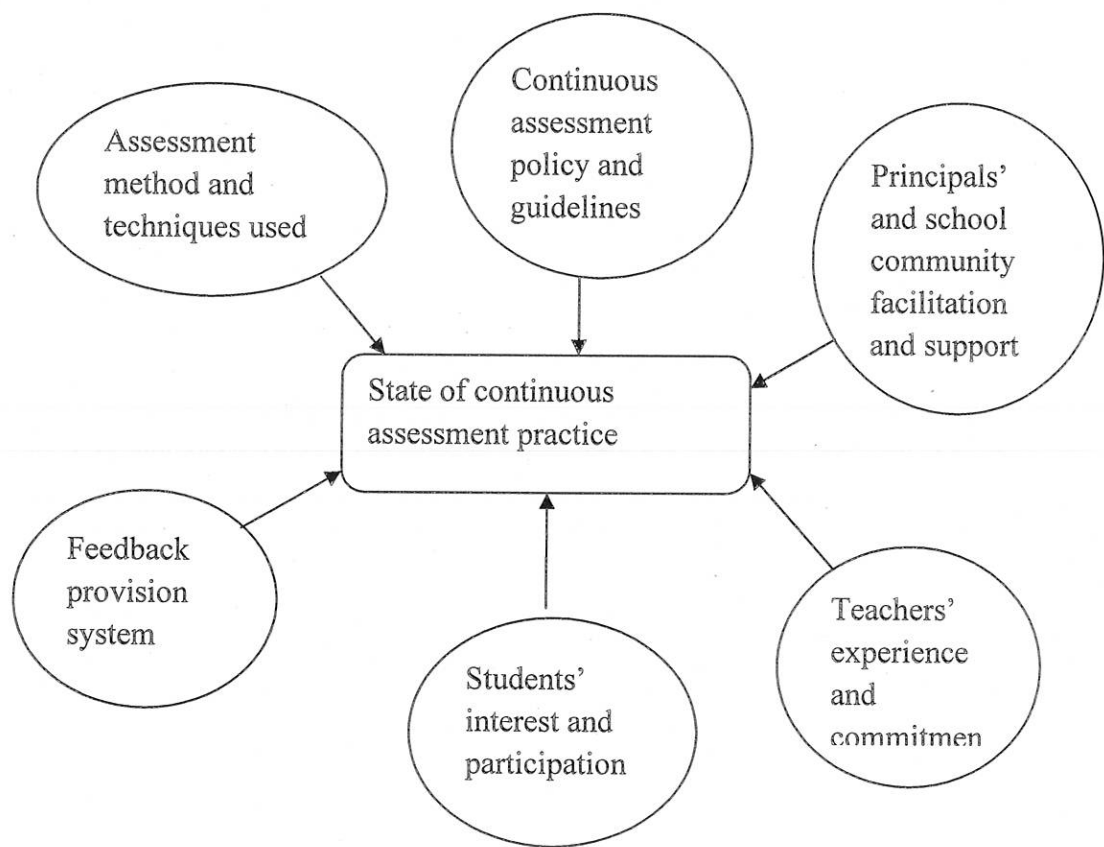
the right answer to an examination question, students commit a large part of their time to memorizing chunks of information, as replied by 90.3 % of the sample students because teachers mostly emphasize facts and informatics in their questions for exam/tests. He further explains in his findings by saying that assessment, particularly in the form of examination, which emphasizes recall of a wide range of very specific information systems employed by teachers, only allows a student to pass by replaying information from lecture and text books. The purpose of evaluation in the learner centered learning approach is not merely to rate the learners' performance and to maintain academic standards, but it should be used instead to encourage independent learning and critical thinking.

2.8 Conceptual Design of the Study

Continuous assessment practice as revised from different materials has its own principles, guidelines and characteristics which facilitates the practice. Based on the theoretical background discussed above, this study has its conceptual design which is the milestone of the study process. Thus, assessment is both a teaching approach and a set of assessment techniques which performed by teachers and their students to assess the learning activity and challenges that hinder them to achieve the learning objective through continuous assessment.

In this regard, assessment activities should appropriately plan and used in order to bring the desired learning outcomes in students learning. Almost all materials which were reviewed under this chapter discusses the assessment methods used, its policy and guidelines, teachers experience and commitment, students' interest and participation and feedback provision system. Therefore, these areas are taken as the model which used throughout the study to detect the status of continuous assessment practice in secondary schools.

Fig.1. Conceptual model/ visual representation of the study.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology through which the research was conducted. The population targeted, the research area, methods of data collection and analysis methods were discussed here under.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed the mixed method. Because this method helps the researcher to see the issue under study both from qualitative and quantitative perspective. And the method is appropriate to bring a solution which is understandable and implemented by all the consumers of the research findings. Further, mixed method is used to complement the weakness of one method by the strength of the other method. Quantitative research method helps to analyze a data which was quantitative in nature whereas, qualitative research was used to analyze those data which were not quantitative in nature.

3.2. Research Method

Descriptive survey research was employed for this study. It is selected for the reason that it enables the researcher to obtain current information about the practices and challenges in implementing continuous assessment in selected secondary schools. It is also relevant to collect detailed and a variety of information concerning continuous assessment. Moreover, Kothari (2004) stated that the major purpose of descriptive survey is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present. Furthermore, he explained that the main characteristic of descriptive survey is that it enables the researcher to come up with what has happened or what is happening.

3.3. Source of Data

Having a real source of data in the process of the study is unquestionable to address the basic questions. To have thick and valuable data, both primary and secondary sources of data were used in this study.

3.3.1 Primary Sources

Primary sources were principals, vice-principals, secondary school teachers, secondary school students and woreda supervisors. Primary sources help the researcher to get firsthand information about the issue under study.

3.3.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary data was obtained from documents. In this regard, an assessment of documents related to the areas of the study was consulted at the selected secondary schools. These documents include student mark list, teachers' daily assessment report and other important documents.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The area under study, which is Oromia Special Zone, has six (6) *woredas* and eight (8) administrative towns. The classification of this zone into *woreda* and administration town is for the purposes of provision of effective administration and facilitating the guidance and support to teaching and learning processes and other sectors development. Due to this fact, all necessary activities related to teaching learning process are anticipated to be realized in both cases.

However, in terms of facilities, and background of teachers, those secondary schools found in administrative towns are more beneficial than those found in *woredas*. As a result the researcher categorized the zone into two strata, which are administrative town and *woredas*. On top of this, three out of eight administrative towns and two out of four *woredas* were selected using simple random (lottery method) sampling techniques from the two strata. Thus, for this study Gelan administrative town, Holeta Administrative town, Dukem Administrative town, Sebeta Hawas *woreda*, and Wolmera *woreda* were considered. In case, due to the absence of high school in, Akaki *woreda* and Barak *woreda* were not considered in the population.

Moreover, a total of 5 (36%) secondary schools were incorporated in the study using availability sampling techniques in the case of one secondary school and simple random (lottery method) sampling techniques in *woredas* with two secondary schools. These schools were Gelan secondary school, Oda Nebe Secondary School, Holeta Secondary School, Tafki Secondary School and Menagesha Kolbo Secondary school. Likewise all

the available numbers of principal and woreda supervisor were taken from selected woredas and administrative towns. In the case of teachers from the total of 144 respondents, 72 (50%) of teachers were sampled from each school by simple random sampling techniques (lottery method). Furthermore, multistage sampling technique following simple random (lottery method) was employed to select 219 students out of 5489 students in these sampled high schools. The aim was to create equal chance for the population to be included in a sample.

Table 1. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

No	Secondary Schools	Principals			Woreda Supervisors			Teachers			Students		
		Pop	Samp.	%	Popu	Samp	%	Popu	Samp	%	Popu	Samp	%
1	Gelan	1	1	100	1	1	100	13	7	53	219	9	4
2	Holeta	1	1	100	1	1	100	71	35	49	2529	101	4
3	OdaNebe	1	1	100	1	1	100	31	15	48	1498	60	4
4	Menagesh	1	1	100	1	1	100	15	8	51	585	23	4
5	Tafki	1	1	100	1	1	100	14	7	50	658	26	4
Total		5	5	100	5	5	100	144	72	50	5489	219	4
Sampling techn.	Simple random & availability	Availability			Availability			Simple random			Multistage and simple random		

Source: Oromia Special Zone education Office, 2004 E.C

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using different data collecting instruments. Among these, questionnaire, interview, and documentary analysis were employed for the study to collect primary and secondary data.

3.5.1 Questionnaire

For this study, questionnaire is the important data collecting tool. It was used as the data collecting instrument to get sufficient primary data. Both open-ended and close-ended questions were developed for teachers and students. The questionnaire is selected not only because it is the most common data gathering tool, but also it helps to collect a great deal of information within the time limit and help to reach large group of research subjects Kothari, (2004). The questionnaire was prepared for teachers and students separately. The items were prepared in English and translated to Afan Oromo for student participants. This was because of that Afan Oromo is widely the medium of communication in the area and to help participants to express their idea in detail.

To test the validity and reliability of the instrument, a draft of the questionnaire was distributed for senior graduate students and to the researcher colleagues. They comment that, the instruments were lacks consistency, clarity in some aspects and they identify some topographical errors. Based on their comment the necessary correction was done to improve the validity and reliability of the instruments.

3.5.2 Interview

The other instrument used for the collection of primary data for the study is an interview. It is helpful to supplement the information gathered, through other instruments, as well as for the clarification of some unforeseen information. Consequently, a face-to-face communication was held with teachers, principals and woreda supervisors.

3.5.3 Documentary Analysis

In addition to the above instruments of data collection, documentary analysis was used to gather secondary data. Therefore, reliable information was obtained from the five selected secondary schools. Essential documents, like schools plans for the

implementation of continuous assessment, student mark list, teachers' assessment report and other relevant documents were analyzed.

3.6 Techniques of Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were used in the study. Quantitative data which was collected through questionnaire from teachers and students was organized, tabulated and described quantitatively, using percentage, frequency, and chi-square. Those data which were collected from participants through interview and open-ended questions were narrated in words in order to supplement the information gathered through other instruments.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data gathered from groups of participants using questionnaire, interview and documents. The questionnaire was administered to teachers and students, whilst the interview was conducted with principals, and supervisors of woreda and administrative towns' education offices at the selected secondary schools. In order to get more information, documents were analyzed in selected secondary schools and woreda and administrative towns' education offices. The first part of this chapter deals with the personal information of participants whilst the second section deals with the analysis of the findings of the study in relation to the basic research questions.

4.1 Background and Characteristics of Participants

In general, 291 questionnaires were distributed to the groups of participants. Out of these questionnaire 260 (89.3%) were filled out and returned. Out of the total 260 questionnaire, 63(87.5%) and 197(89.95%), of the questionnaires distributed to teachers and students respectively and filled out, returned and used for the analysis. All the groups of participants of the selected secondary schools were asked to indicate their personal information in the questionnaire. Their responses were summarized as follows.

Table 2. Characteristics of teacher participants by age, sex, qualification, teaching experience and teaching load.

The following table deals with the personal information of teacher participants. It focuses on sex, age, qualification, teaching experience and their work load.

No	Items	Teacher Respondents characteristics	N	%
1	Sex	M	48	76.2
		F	15	23.8
		Total	63	100
		Return rate= $\frac{63 \times 100}{72}$		87.5%
2	Age	20-25 yr	4	6.34
		26-30 yr	24	38
		31-35 yr	11	17.46
		36-40 yr	8	12.69
		41 and above	16	25.39
		Total	63	100
3	Qualification	Diploma	9	14.29
		BA/Bed/Bsc.	54	85.71
		Total	63	100
4	Teaching experience	0-3	11	17.46
		4-7	15	23.8
		8-11	17	27
		12-15	2	3.17
		16 and above	18	28.57
		Total	63	100
5	Work load (periods)	10-15	21	33.33
		16-20	37	58.7
		21 and above	5	8
		Total	63	100

Table 2 above dealt with the background information of teacher participants in the research area. Specifically it explores sex, age qualification, teaching experience and work load. Hence, respondents were asked at the first their sex in the first item of the table. Thus, majority of them, 48 (76.2%) of the participants were male teachers and 15 (23.8%) of them were females. Females constitute only a few proportions of the staff.

This indicates that there was low employment rate of female employees in the schools. This might imply that females were not empowered to be educated in the past few years.

Concerning the age composition of participants, majority, 35(55.46%) of the participants were at the age group of 26-35years. This shows the teaching learning activity was carried out by both who were less experienced and more experienced teachers. With regard to the level of educational qualification, majority of the teachers 58 (92%) were first degree holders. This is the positive factor which facilitates the continuous assessment practice with necessary knowledge. Moreover, 31(50.8%) teacher participants had 4-11 years service.

Regarding the teachers' workload, 37(58.7) of the teachers have 16-20 teaching load per week. This show in the research area (Oromia Special Zone) teachers has no such work load which hinders them to practice the continuous assessment in their school.

In general the characteristics of the respondents have positive implication on the research activity in that it helps the researcher to get the necessary data from different age group and work experience.

Table 3.Characteristics of student participants

Table 3 below emphasizes the student participant characteristics. Mainly it stress on their sex, age and their grade level.

No	Item	Student participants' characteristics	N	%
1	Sex	M	142	72
		F	55	28
		Total	197	100
		Return rate= $\frac{197 \times 100}{219}$		89.95
2	Age	14-16	45	23
		17-19	131	66
		20-22	13	7
		23 and above	8	4
		Total	197	100
3	Grade	9 th	108	55
		10 th	89	45
		Total	197	100

Table 3 above dealt with the background of student participants. It emphasizes on sex, age and grade level of students. As we can see from the table 142(72%) male and 55(28%) female students were participated in the research process. Though the sample selection technique was multistage and simple random sampling techniques, the difference was existed because of that the number of female students at high school level is low. Regarding their age, similarly 131(66.5%) of students were in the age group of 17-19. This shows us most of the students were at secondary school age level which enables them to practice any activity that given them through continuous assessment techniques.

4.2. Result and Discussions

Data should be discussed and interpreted in relation to the objectives of the research. Based on the data collected from participants, in order to reach on the result the analysis and discussion done as follows.

In-service and pre-service training background of teachers on continuous assessment.

In-service training, such as periodic refreshment courses, workshops, seminars and conference are essential parts of the ongoing work and development of teacher training education in order to keep up with the current trends in the application of continuous assessment. The effective implementation of continuous assessment depends on continuous and practical training of teachers and students. If this is so, there will be progress on teaching learning activity.

Table 4

No	Description	Response	Teacher participants	
			N	%
1	Have you had any form of continuous assessment training during your pre service program	Yes	25	39.69
		No	38	60.31
	Total		63	100
2	Have you had any form of continuous assessment training in your work?	Yes	30	47.61
		No	33	52.39
	Total		63	100
3	Number of days in which you participated on training at your work place	Alternatives	N	%
		One day	12	40
		Three days	14	46.6
		A week	4	13.4
	Total		30	100

As shown in table 4 of item No 1, respondents were asked if they had participated in any form of continuous assessment training. Thus, 25(39.69%) of participants confirmed that they had training on continuous assessment during their pre-service program. On the other hand, 38(60.31%) have not taken the training in similar time. Similarly, 33(52.39%) of the participants were never have taken the training concerning continuous assessment in the work.

Therefore, though some teachers took the training in pre-service or in-service program, the training lacks continuity and the training days were short. This affects the continuous

assessment practice process which teachers expected to implement in the teaching learning activity.

Integration of continuous assessment method in lesson plan

Continuous assessment is well practiced if it is integrated with the lesson delivered in the class. The following table discusses whether teachers integrate continuous assessment in their lesson or not.

Table 5.

No	Integration of continuous assessment	Response	Teacher participants	
			N	%
4	Including continuous assessment plan, in the lesson	Yes	47	74.6
		No	16	25.4
	Total		63	100
5	Frequency of incorporating continuous assessment in lesson plan	Alternatives	N	%
		Always	12	25.5
		Sometimes	21	44.7
		Rarely	14	29.8
		Not at all	-	-
	Total		47	100

Regarding the integration of assessment method in lesson, Jorolimk and Paker (1997); Ruddell (1997), forwarded that teachers should treat continuous assessment as an integral part of curriculum and instruction. If assessment is to facilitate students learning, it must be woven in to the fabric of curriculum and instruction. Hence, in table no.5 item no. 4, participants were asked to react if they include continuous assessment plan in the lesson. Thus, majority of them 47(74.6%) were confirmed that they include it in a lesson plan. This tells us though most of the teachers haven't taken training; they incorporate continuous assessment in the lesson. Concerning its frequency, when12 (25.5%) of the teachers were included always the continuous assessment method in their lesson, 21(44.7%) include sometimes. As we understand from table 5, it seems most teachers incorporate continuous assessment plan in their lesson. But results from the document analysis shows there was no such well planned lesson which have different assessment

techniques. And also as the interviewee (Teacher Mengistu), from Gelan secondary school on May 02/2012 responded, “Though we try to incorporate in the lesson, because of time constraint and large class size, we did not implement the method in practical.” Regarding this, Ellington and Early (1997:121) stated that:

Unless continuous assessment is carefully planned and coordinated, there is a very real danger that student may be grossly over assessed particular of certain times of the year, when several lectures are asking simultaneously for assignments to be handed in continuous assessment can, if not properly managed adversely and their tutors with the latter being regarded with suspicion and (Some extreme cases) enmity and occasionally even introducing mal practice, as in introducing penalties for seeking help.

As it is understandable from interview results, though some teachers not include continuous assessment in lesson plan, sometimes they use in a class without plan.

Stages of continuous assessment used in the lesson presentation

Table 6, below shows the stage at which teachers use continuous assessment in the lesson presentation. If continuous assessment is the part of a lesson it should be used in an appropriate place which helps to serve the purpose it intends.

Table 6.

No	Item	Stages at which assessments used	Teacher participants' response	%
6	At which stage of instruction continuous assessment was used	At the beginning of the lesson	3	6.38
		While the course going on	13	27.6
		At the end of the lesson	27	57.4
		At each stage	4	8.5
	Total		47	100

As indicated in item no 6 of table 6, participants were asked at what stage they use continuous assessment techniques while they present the lesson. When only 4(8.5%)

participants use continuous assessment at each stage of the lesson, about 27(57.4%) teachers use at the end of the lesson. As understandable from table 6, teachers use continuous assessment differently at different stage, which makes the teaching learning activity less interactive and don't give a chance for students to take part in the whole process. Literature taught us that continuous assessment should be practiced in three levels in every lesson i.e. before, during and after the lesson. All these levels have their own importance for students' progress. Concerning the duration of continuous assessment, USAID/ Basic Education Program (2006) as shown in the document, it supports the three levels of assessment, but that of secondary school is quite different and unmanageable.

Reasons to use or not to use continuous assessment

The reason why teachers use continuous assessment or they are not preferred to use the method is discussed in the table. Sitiggnns (1998; Ostcrhof 1999; Popham 1999), as cited in Dereje (2010) concluded the use of continuous assessment for teachers in the classroom are to find out what students know and can do, to gain confidence in what we say our students know and can do and also it provide all children with opportunity to show what they know to promote learning for understanding.

Table 7.

No	Items	Alternatives	No	%
7	Use continuous assessment	to improve students' learning (self learning, cooperative learning)	27	57.4
		to know how much the students understand the content	14	30
		to develop the students participation	6	12.6
	Total		47	100
8	Don't use continuous assessment	it takes time and the lesson is given by plasma	5	31.25
		shortage of materials	4	25
		large class size	6	37.5
		lack of awareness	1	6.25
	Total		16	100

As in the table 7 above, participants were asked why they use continuous assessment. Thus, 27(57.4%) teacher participants replied that they used continuous assessment to improve students' learning (self learning, cooperative learning), in similar way 14(30%) participants were use continuous assessment to know how much the students understand the content.

In contrast, in item no.8 about 16(25.4%) of the teachers were replied that they didn't use continuous assessment because of different reasons. About 5(31.25%) reply that they were not use continuous assessment because of that it takes time and the lesson is given by plasma. In the same way, 6(37.5%) of the teachers don't use continuous assessment because of large class size. Regarding this, one of the interviewee from Oda Nabe Secondary school replied on May 04/2012, "Most of the time after we collect and record the assessment results, we use to give marks for students. That is the main reason why we conduct an assessment."

Even though marking is one of the purpose of continuous assessment, it has other purpose, such as using continuous assessment results for diagnosing the areas in which students have difficulty, teachers to monitor the impact of their lesson on students understanding did not get attention and teachers use it to modify their pedagogical strategies seemed to forgotten. In line with this, in USAID (2003) it is stated that continuous assessment is much more than examination of students' achievement and the purpose of continuous assessment is beyond recording the result, and it includes feedback, guidance modifying the teaching-learning activities.

Moreover, the purpose of continuous assessment is not only recording but also helping particularly those students who performed below average using different means such as remedial teaching or reassessing, giving tutorial, etc.

Using or not to use different types of continuous assessment techniques and Students' involvement in continuous assessment tasks

There are different methods of continuous assessment in assessing students learning. The uses of these methods help the teacher to know each students understanding about the lesson. The table below shows the responses of teacher participants regarding the issue.

Table 8.

No	Items	Alternatives	Teacher participants	
			N	%
9	Do you use different continuous assessment techniques in a class?	Yes	58	92
		No	5	8
		Total	63	100
10	Involvement of student in continuous assessment	Always	27	42.9
		Sometimes	24	38
		Rarely	11	17.5
		Not at all	1	1.6
		Total	63	100

As in table 8, item 9, above participants were asked whether they use different type of continuous assessment in a class. Thus, 58(92%) were confirmed that they use different types of continuous assessment techniques in a class. Only 5(8%) of them replied that they were not used different types of continuous assessment techniques in a class. As the data from interview and document analysis confirmed, though teachers try to use different types of continuous assessment in a class, the activity was not address each student or students were not assessed individually. We assesses only through group works, paper and pencil test and assignments which lacks proper feedback and comment." So, it is possible to say, there is only intention to use continuous assessment without having full understanding of how to use different techniques of continuous assessment and because of this the real practice of continuous assessment is low.

One of the major importance of continuous assessment implementation is that it enhances student participation in the teaching learning process.

Concerning the involvement of students in continuous assessment activity, as shown in table 8, item 10, participants were asked whether they involve students in continuous assessment activity or not. Hence, 27(42.85%) of the participants were responded that they always involve their students in the activity. About 11 (17.46%) rarely give a chance to involve students in the continuous assessment activity. But results from interview show that, “We teachers, give group work or project work for students in such a case most students perform without full participation in the group member and we mark the activity equally for all group members without checking the efforts made by each group members because of shortage of time.”

Responses of teachers and students on the provision of feedback and its frequency on continuous assessment activities

Feedback has been considered as a basic thing for learning (Rown free, 1987). Moreover, it is a crucial feature of the teaching learning process for it contributes directly to the progress in learning through the process of formative assessment and directly through the development of pupils’ academic self esteem.

Table 9.

No	Items	Alternatives	Participants				Total		Chi-square	P-value
			Students		Teachers					
			N	%	N	%	N	%		
11	Feedback provision	Yes	93	47.2	58	92	151	58	39.3	0.000
		No	104	52.8	5	8	109	42		
		Total		197	100	63	100	260		
12	Frequency of feedback provision	In each continuous assessment tasks	26	28	22	38	48	31.7	2.72	0.593
		When test papers returned to the students	53	57	25	43	78	51.7		
		At the end of the semester/course	14	15	11	19	25	16.5		
		Total		93	100	58	100	151		

$df = (C-1)(R-1) = (2-1)(2-1) = 1$, significance level 0.05

Regarding feedback provision, as indicated in table 9, item 11 above, student participants required to reply whether they have given feedback or not. Thus, 104(52.8%) give their response as feedback is not given for them. In case of teacher participants 58(92%) of them replied that they give feedback for students. The result from chi-square at the significance level of 0.05 revealed that there is statistically significant difference between teachers and student participants' response. This means, feedback provision on continuous assessment is not in similar and continuous way. Results from data analysis and interview revealed that, in many activities, such as in group discussion, presentation, oral questioning, assignment and others, teachers always collect mark for those activities. Rather than used for feedback or diagnosis, checking progress or how much they have changed by the instruction. From this we can understand that the results of continuous assessment were not used properly or it was practiced for grading or product rather than for the process. As a result it could not improve both the learning and teaching activities and also put negative impact on the quality of our education. Timely feedback serves a good purpose than which provided lately.

As illustrated in the table 9, item 12, participants were asked the time of feedback given. Thus, 53(57%) of students reply that feedback is given while the test paper returned to students. In case of teacher respondents about 25(43%) of them give feedback when the test paper returned to students. The results of chi-square at the significance level of 0.05, reveals there is no statistically significant difference among the responses of teacher and student participants concerning the feedback provision time. This confirm us most teachers give feedback, at the termination of test paper for students which has nothing to improve students current academic progression.

Table 10.Reasons why teacher participants did not provide feedback.

As most teachers gives feedback some teachers didn't do that. The table below shows teacher participants who didn't provide feedback with their reason.

No.	Item	Response	Teacher participant		Total	
			N	%	N	%
13	Reason for not give feedback	Lack of time and students are not interested	5	7.93	5	7.93

Regarding the absence of feedback, as indicated in table 10 above, 5(7.93%) participants were try to reason out for not using feedback i.e. lack of time and students are not highly interested, especially when students are told their weakness they feel ashamed. But the teaching learning process always needs feedback to bring a change in the students' performance. Concerning this, (Airssian, 1991 cited in Brihanu, 2004) shows opposite idea to this finding, because it is stated that students learn more in classes where assessment is an integral part of instruction and which provides feedback about learning progress. In addition to this, the aim of continuous assessment is to provide feedback. In the light of this, Brooks (2002) also put the same idea that was shown in the literature i.e. giving and receiving feedback are the central skills of continuous assessment and the purpose of feedback is to help students improve their learning. It should also be specific, accurate, timely, and clear, focused up on the attainable and expressed in a way which will encourage students to think and changes their mind. But, the finding shows most of the feedback not given timely.

In general, the way that the feedback was given to students is not similar and not continuous. This makes the teachers not to get the real students performances; and students are not able to improve their performance since they don't get timely feedback.

Continuous assessment documents used by teachers and support from school administration

The practice of continuous assessment could be assisted by different documents. Here table 13 shows how many teachers use different documents that help them to implement the continuous assessment.

Table 11

No	Items	Alternatives	Teacher participants	
			No	%
14	Guideline supplied by school	Yes	21	33.33
		No	42	66.67
	Total		63	100
15	Types of documents used for continuous assessment	only assessment format given from school	19	30.3
		assessment guideline developed at school level	21	33.3
		guideline developed at department level	12	19
		There is no any document	11	17.4
	Total		63	100
16	Support of school administration on continuous assessment	Very high	-	-
		High	5	7.93
		Average	27	42.82
		Below average	31	49.2
		Never	-	-
	Total		63	100

As illustrated in table 11, item 14, participants were asked to give answer whether they are supplied guideline by school. Based on the question 21 (33.33%) were replied that the assessment guideline is provided by schools. In contrast, 42(66.7%) given their response that schools do not provide any guideline on continuous assessment. Regarding types of continuous assessment on item 15, 19(30%) of the teachers confirmed that they used assessment format given from school and 12(19%) of teachers use the guideline developed at department level. The data indicates that there are no uniform continuous

assessment documents in secondary schools. Results from document analysis revealed that, there was no continuous assessment guideline provision except the assessment recording format which was provided from school.

To sum up, the change of behavior in teaching learning process will be checked only by means of assessment. But, the document like lesson plan which includes continuous assessment techniques was not prepared in these schools, and this affects the teaching-learning activities and instructional processes. Without having proper plan of continuous assessment devices it will not be easy to bring changes in teaching learning process and it affects the quality of education.

School administrations have the highest responsibility to support activities which enhance the teaching learning activity of the school. Unless the efforts made by the principals, whatever the teachers practices in the school may not resulted as intended. The following table deals with school administration support on continuous assessment practice.

Regarding the support provision, as shown in table 11, item 16, participants were asked whether they have support from school or not. Thus, only 5(8%) of teachers reply that the support from school administration was high and 31(49.2%) replied that the support provided to teachers is below average. This indicates the support given from school administration for the continuous assessment practice is not enough and continuous in each high schools. The result from teachers' interview ascertain administrators were not in position to guide and support teachers. One of the interviewee responds on May 05/2012 from Gelan Secondary School, as the activity concerning continuous assessment is left only for teacher by saying "How could be possible to clap with one hand?" it means there is no planned and timely support from school or from any other stakeholders.

Interview participant of principals said that, "It is up to teachers to use the MoE guide line supplied in the form of jobs, duties and tasks." Therefore there is a difference in teachers and principals regarding the issue.

Generally, if there is no common guide lines of what, how and when, etc..., for continuous assessment, the overall objectives of schools will not be achieved as assessment and teaching-learning activity must be done cooperatively and collectively,

rather than separately. If they were using the guideline at department level, there would be some confusion on students and on the collective nature of teaching learning could not practiced effectively.

Table 12a. Continuous Assessment Techniques Used by Teachers (as reported by teachers and students)

Teachers and Students										
No	Item	Response	Participant category				Total		Chi-square	P-value
1	Class work		Teachers		Students					
			N	%	N	%	N	%		
		Always	8	12.7	16	8	24	9.2	10.51	0.027
		Sometimes	29	46	135	68.5	164	63.1		
		When necessary	23	36.5	42	21.5	65	25		
Don't use	3	4.8	4	2	7	2.7				
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		
2	Home work	Always	19	30.2	108	54.82	127	48.8	11.88	0.021
		Sometimes	27	42.8	63	32	90	34.6		
		When necessary	16	25.4	24	12.18	40	15.4		
		Don't use	1	1.6	2	1	3	1.2		
		Total	63	100	197	100	260	100		
3	Observation	Always	11	17.5	4	2.03	15	5.8	34.86	0.000
		Sometimes	17	27	28	14.2	45	17.3		
		When necessary	20	31.7	53	26.9	73	28		
		Don't use	15	23.8	113	57.36	128	47.8		
		Total	63	100	197	100	260	100		
4	Oral question	Always	39	62	64	32.48	103	39.6	19.14	0.010
		Sometimes	14	22.2	97	49.2	111	42.7		
		When necessary	7	11	22	11.16	29	11.2		
		Don't use	3	4.76	14	7.1	17	6.5		
		Total	63	100	197	100	260	100		

$df=(2-1)(4-1)=3$, significance level 0.05

As it is shown in Table 12a, of item 1, participants were asked how often teachers were use class work in assessing students learning continuously. Thus, 29 (46%) of teachers use class work sometimes to assess the students learning. In the same way 135(68.5%) of students replied that teachers use sometimes class work method of assessment. The result from chi-square shows that there is statistically significant difference between two

participants' response. Thus, it confirms us that there is no similar way of using class work as continuous assessment techniques.

Concerning home work, 108(54.8%) students responded home work is always used in assessing students' activity. In other way 27(42.8%) teachers replied as they use home work sometimes in assessing students learning. Regarding the results of chi-square, there is statistically significant difference between teachers and students' response. This indicates participants have no the same understanding that the use of homework as continuous assessment techniques.

In item No 3 of table 12, participants were asked how observation is used in assessing students learning. Thus, 20(31.7%) teachers replied observation is used rarely in assessing students learning. About 113(57.36%) students responded that observation is not used by teachers in assessing students learning. Results of chi-square shows there is statistically significant difference at the significance level of .05 between students and teachers response.

Regarding the use of oral question, 39(62%) teacher participants and 64(32.48%) of student participant respectively responded that oral question is used always in assessing students' learning. About 97(49.2%) students replied that teachers use oral question sometimes in assessing students' progress. Concerning the results of chi-square, there is statistically significant difference between teacher and student participants' response concerning the use of oral question in assessing students' progress in learning.

Table 12b. Continuous Assessment Techniques Used by Teachers (as reported by teachers and students)

No	Item	Response	Participant category				Total		Chi-square	P-value
			Teachers		Students					
5	Group discussion	Always	11	17.46	28	14.2	39	15	19.72	0.010
		Sometimes	21	33.34	89	45.17	110	42.3		
		When necessary	24	38	58	29.44	82	31.5		
		Don't use	7	11	22	11.16	29	11.2		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		
6	Presentation	Always	20	31.74	8	4.06	28	10.8	39.55	0.000
		Sometimes	17	27.26	74	37.57	91	35		
		When necessary	19	30	67	34	86	33		
		Don't use	7	11	48	24.36	55	21.2		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		
7	Reflection	Always	17	27	31	15.7	48	18.5	13.36	0.021
		Sometimes	18	28.57	31	15.7	49	18.8		
		When necessary	15	23.8	53	26.9	68	26.2		
		Don't use	13	20.6	82	41.62	95	36.5		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		
8	Peer assessment	Always	5	8	21	10.65	26	10	6.92	0.214
		Sometimes	21	33	92	46.7	113	43.5		
		When necessary	20	31.7	56	28.42	76	29.2		
		Don't use	17	27	28	14.21	45	17.3		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		

$df=(2-1)(4-1)=3$, significance level 0.05

In item No 5 of table 12b, participants were asked how often the group activity is used in assessing students learning. Hence, 89(45.17%) students responded that group activity was used sometimes in assessing students learning. About 24(38%) teachers were replied that they use group activity method when necessary in assessing students learning. From chi-square results, there is statistically significant difference between the responses of the participants. It means, there is no similar understanding among the participants concerning group activity as techniques of continuous assessment.

Regarding item No 6 of table 12, the participants were asked how often presentation is used in assessing students learning. Thus, 74(37.57%) of students responded that

presentation is used sometimes in assessing teaching learning progress and 20(31%) of teachers replied it is used always in assessing the students progression. The chi-square result shows there is a statistically significant difference between teachers and students response. This means, the participants' perception regarding using presentation as techniques of continuous assessment is not similar.

Participants were also requested in item No 7 of table 12, how often reflection method of assessment used in continuous assessment practice. Hence, 17(27%) of teachers responded, it is used always in the practice. In contrast, 82(41.62%) of student participants replied that there was no time that reflection method was used in the practice. From this, we can understand that there is no this much attention in using this method in the practice of continuous assessment. Regarding the results of chi-square, there is a statistically significant difference between teachers participant and students participant response.

In item No 8 of table 12, participants were also asked how often assessment method of continuous assessment practice used peers assessment method. Thus, 21(33%) of teacher participants and 92(46.7%) of students respectively replied that it is used sometimes to assess the students learning. The chi-square result shows there is a statistically significant difference between teachers and students response.

Table 12c. Continuous Assessment Techniques Used by Teachers (as reported by teachers and students)

No	Item	Response	Participant category				Total		Chi-square	P-value
			Teachers		Students					
9	Self assessment	Always	15	23.8	33	16.75	48	18.5	6.31	0.216
		Sometimes	23	36.5	64	32.48	87	33.5		
		When necessary	17	27	48	24.36	65	25		
		Don't use	8	12.7	52	29.36	60	23		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		
10	Project work	Always	1	1.58	6	3.04	7	2.69	3.81	0.514
		Sometimes	15	23.8	42	21.3	57	22		
		When necessary	28	46	60	30.06	88	34.2		
		Don't use	19	30.2	89	45.2	108	41.5		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		
11	Quizzes	Always	5	8	32	16.24	37	14.2	3.13	0.527
		Sometimes	31	49.2	95	48.22	126	48.5		
		When necessary	18	28.57	44	22.23	62	23.8		
		Don't use	9	14.3	26	13.19	35	13.5		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		
12	Test (paper & pencil)	Always	26	41.3	84	42.63	110	42.3	3.76	0.519
		Sometimes	27	42.8	85	43.17	112	43		
		When necessary	3	4.76	18	9.1	21	8.2		
		Don't use	7	11	10	5.07	17	6.5		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		

$df=(2-1)(4-1)=3$, significance level 0.05

In item No. 9 of table 12, participant were also asked how often self assessment techniques of continuous assessment is used in assessing the students learning. Hence, 23(36.5%) of teachers and 64(32.48%) of students responded self assessment is sometimes used in assessing students. Regarding the results of chi-square at the significance level of 0.05 revealed there is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students response. It shows that participants have an awareness concerning the use of self assessment techniques in continuous assessment.

In item No. 10 of table 12, teacher and student participants were asked how often the project work is used in the continuous assessment practice. Hence, 28(46%) of teacher

and 60(30.06%) students responded that project work is used when necessary. In addition, the chi-square at the significance level of 0.05 result shows there is no statistically significant difference between these participants' response rather than by chance or any other case. It shows that the participants have an awareness concerning the project work in continuous assessment practice.

In item No. 11 of table 12, participants were also asked how the quizzes used in continuous assessment practice. Thus, 31(49.2%) of teachers and 95(48.22%) students give their response respectively that, quizzes used sometimes in the continuous assessment practice. On the other hand, 9 (14.3%) teachers and 26(13.19%) students responded that there is no assessment of students learning through quizzes. The chi-square result at the significance level of 0.05 reveals that there is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students response. This confirms us, that participants have an understanding concerning the use of quizzes in continuous assessment practice.

Concerning test (paper and pencil test), respondents were asked in item No. 12 of table 12, how often it is used in the practice of continuous assessment. Hence, 26(41.3%) of teachers and 84(42.63%) of students respectively replied that paper and pencil test is used always in assessing students' learning. This shows that paper and pencil test is the method which is used frequently than the other in continuous assessment practice that the participants responded in similar way. The chi-square result at the significance level of 0.05 revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the teachers and students response. This shows that paper and pencil test is the known continuous assessment practice techniques as reported by the participants.

Table 12d. Continuous Assessment Techniques Used by Teachers (as reported by teachers and students)

No	Item	Response	Participant category				Total		Chi-square	P-value
			Teachers		Students					
13	Interviews	Always	7	11	13	6.59	20	7.7	8.83	0.031
		Sometimes	13	20.6	78	39.59	91	35		
		When necessary	21	33.4	43	21.82	64	24.6		
		Don't use	22	35	63	32	85	32.7		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		
14	Exam	Always	8	12.7	17	4.56	25	9.6	4.32	0.376
		Sometimes	15	23.8	72	36.54	87	33.5		
		When necessary	39	62	102	51.77	141	54.2		
		Don't use	1	1.58	6	3.02	7	2.8		
Total			63	100	197	100	260	100		

$df=(2-1) (4-1)=3$,significance level 0.05

In item No. 13 of table 12, participants were also asked how often interview is practiced in continuous assessment. Thus, 13(20.6%) of teachers and 78(39.59%) of students respectively replied that it is used sometimes in assessing students learning. In contrast, 22(35%) of teachers and 63(32%) of students replied that there is no the practice of interview in the process of assessing students performance. The chi-square result at the significance level of 0.05 exhibits that there is statistically significant difference between the participants response. It means that, participants have no similar awareness about the implementation of interview in continuous assessment practice.

Concerning the exam, in item No 14 of table 12, teachers and students respondents were asked how often it is used in the continuous assessment. Hence, 15(23.8%) of teachers and 72(36.54%) of students respectively responded that exam is used sometimes in the practice. In the same way, 39(62%) of teachers and 102(51.77%) of students respectively give their answer that it is used only when necessary. The chi-square result shows there is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students response. This shows exam is the techniques which used in continuous assessment practice.

In general, the results of the above table shows teachers were not used different assessment methods and techniques of continuous assessment similarly in continuous

way. The results from interview and document analysis also show the practice of continuous assessment in high school context is unmanageable for a number of reasons. Teacher administering paper and pencil tests rather than using different types of continuous assessment techniques. This practice, however, is highly criticized by educators. Black and William (1998) commented that teachers' heavy use of tests as a means of assessing student performance encourage rote and superficial learning.

Similarly, Pap worth (2005) stated that teachers' reliance on testing denies many learners the opportunity to demonstrate their true potentials. According to Freedman (1998), continuous assessment, other than tests of examinations must include varied assessment tools such as projects, presentation, interviews, observations, oral questions, home works, seat works and similar other kinds. The validity of our decision is greatly improved when we use a variety of assessment methods for gathering and interpreting students' information.

Students' interest to do the assessment tasks and the reason why they are not.

Students' interest has a significant place in the practice of continuous assessment or in any other teaching-learning duties. Students have their own reason why they are interested or not interested to continuous assessment as discussed in the following table.

Table 13.

No	Items	Response	Student participant	
			N	%
1	Are you interested to do continuous assessment activity	Yes	182	92
		No.	15	8
	Total		197	100
2	Reasons for not doing continuous assessment activity	continuous assessment is time consuming	3	20
		continuous assessment is not effective to measure different performance	4	26.7
		All group members did not provide equal contribution in different group activities	8	53.3
	Total		15	100

Regarding the interests of student towards continuous assessment activity, as in table 13, respondents were asked to answer whether they have interest to do continuous assessment activity or not. Hence, 182(92%) of students confirmed that they were interested to do continuous assessment activity. Only 15(8%) of the students were answered as they were not interested to do continuous assessment activity. Concerning the reason students respond that continuous assessment is time consuming, it is not effective to measure different performance and in group activity all group members did not provide equal contribution in the activity. As understandable from interview with teacher, most students like continuous assessment not for taking full responsibility in the learning activity, but because of that through continuous assessment they get equal result without such strong involvement in group activities with those who can perform well. This is the point where

the assessment activity detached from its objectives-assessing individual student to know their performance and make them to work for better achievement.

Opportunities given for students to evaluate their peer assessment tasks

The collaboration between teachers and student in the continuous assessment activity can bring the result to the maximum. Table 14, emphasize whether teachers have given an opportunity for students or not while continuous assessment activity practiced.

Table 14.

No	Items	Response	Student participant	
			N	%
1	Are there opportunities given for student to evaluate their peer assessment tasks?	Yes	86	43.6
		No	111	56.4
Total			197	100
2	The assessment methods used in the class for peer work evaluation.	Questioning each other	44	51.2
		group work	34	39.5
		Presentation	6	7
		Others	2	2.3
Total			86	100

As in table 14, student participants were asked whether opportunities given for them to evaluate their peer assessment tasks. Thus, 86(43.6%) confirmed that they were given a chance to assess their peer work. But 111(56.4%) replied that the chance was not given them to do so. Regarding the assessment methods used in a class to evaluate each other, 44(51.2%) students were replied they evaluate each other through question and answer when the teacher is not present in aclass,34(39.5%) through group work. This implies that mostly students assessed with each other while the teacher is not in a class through question and answering. No this much teacher effort is applied here only student themselves ask with each other in turn.

As it can be understandable from the above discussion, students did not get a chance to assess their peers and their own work. However, various scholars have asserted that self

and peer assessment help students to develop higher level skills. John D. Van (1997), stated even though the purpose of incorporating continuous assessment in instruction system is mainly to improve teaching-learning process, teachers have to use continuous assessment to judge the achievement of the students. Furthermore, the student report shows that continuous assessment did not help them to improve their activities, and the instruction focus more on outcome than the process.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Under this chapter the overall summary, conclusion and the recommendation forwarded by the researcher presented consecutively.

5.1 SUMMARY

It is an undeniable fact that in recent times many schools have come to the understanding of the importance of the role of continuous assessment practice in improving quality and student improvement. Schools are therefore encouraged to practice continuous assessment to improve their effectiveness. Therefore, on the whole, this study sought to investigate in detail the state of continuous assessment practice in secondary schools. To this end, the following leading questions were formulated.

1. What is the state of continuous assessment practice in secondary schools of Oromia Special zone?
2. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder the effective practice of continuous assessment in secondary schools of Oromia Special Zone?
3. What should be done to improve the current practice of continuous assessment in secondary schools?

This study employed mixed method approach and descriptive survey research method. In conducting this study five secondary schools were selected in random selection and purposive basis from Oromia Special Zone. From these high schools overall 260 sample participants were selected based on simple random (lottery method), availability and multistage sampling techniques. In the process, data was collected from teachers and students through questionnaire. In addition a Personal interview was held with some teachers, school principals, and woreda supervisors. Moreover, the document analysis was made to get additional information on the issue under study. After the quantitative data was collected, it was identified, edited, coded, tallied, tabulated and analyzed through descriptive statistics. The data obtained from participants through open ended questionnaire and interviews, was also analyzed qualitatively in narrative and descriptive form. The results obtained through these three tools were triangulated to create holistic picture of the study.

5.1.1 Findings of the study

Based on the research question after analysis was made using the data gathered from participants it is reached on the following findings.

1. Most teachers had no training about continuous assessment in that they concentrated on summative components of assessment
2. Most teachers didn't include a variety of continuous assessment tools in their plan and did not use in the class room activities. As a result, the status of continuous assessment practice is far from what is needed, and they concentrated on few tools like oral questions, group work, and presentation.
3. There is no timely and change oriented support for teachers from school administration and woreda educational experts.
4. It was found that most of the teachers considered continuous assessment as a series of paper and pencil test activities to measure students' performance.
5. Most teachers see continuous assessment as tiresome and more time consuming.
6. Almost the majority of teachers replied that there was no continuous assessment guide to measure practical skills except the format with different assessment points in it. In addition to this, absence of ground rules that are standard to measure group and individual tasks in practical and skill task lead to bias and unfair grading system which in turn develop negative attitude towards continuous assessment in students.
7. There was a great difference among schools in practicing continuous assessment from planning up to implementation.
8. The cooperation between teachers and students in some school is positive factor that facilitate the continuous assessment practice,
9. Students being in a group in the class also the area that facilitates the practice.
10. The presence of some orientation provision activity in some school can be taken as good attempt.
11. Majority of teachers use continuous assessment results for grading system rather than for students' improvement in their learning.
12. Majority of students have an interest to do assessment tasks given by teachers not to bring what is needed through continuous assessment, but to get mark through group

involvement without working properly. This is because of lack of follow up and well planned activity from teachers' side.

In general, the study indicated that lack of instructional materials for teachers and students, lack of commitment, teachers' inadequate knowledge of the way and techniques of continuous assessment practice, lack of interest on teachers and students concerning continuous assessment, poor administrative support, time constraints, large class size, absence of continuous assessment guide line were the major factors that hindered the proper practice of continuous assessment in high schools.

5.1.2 Major Problems identified

In the research process there are different problems which were identified in the practice of continuous assessment. The problems are related with teachers, students, school administrations and other stakeholders. The major problems identified are:

1. Lack of awareness and readiness to implement continuous assessment: as mentioned earlier, teachers wrongly conceptualize continuous assessment equating it with continuous testing and this in turn have an impact on the practice. Here respondents attributed their misconception of continuous assessment to lack of sufficient knowledge in the area. On the basis of most teachers' view, it can be noted that teachers should be equipped with basic skills and knowledge pertaining to continuous assessment implementation.
2. Insufficient text book and references, lack of supervision etc hinder continuous assessment implementation: The result from the interview revealed, the lack of adequate instructional materials is a challenge for teachers to implement continuous assessment in schools. To integrate instructional materials are indispensable, but scarcity affects the practice of continuous assessment. In relation to this, (Mkhonta, 2003 cited in Teshome, 2003), mentioned lack of adequate materials in schools as encountered difficulty in implementing continuous assessment. It is evident from the above idea that instructional materials are important aspects for continuous assessment practice as a component of instruction to be handled effectively.

3. Large class size is another factor that hinders the practice of continuous assessment. In schools where this research conducted there were about 70-75 students in one class averagely. In such a case it is difficult for teacher to realize continuous assessment practically. Had there been less number of students, it would have been manageable for continuous assessment to be practiced, otherwise it is challenging.
4. Time constraint is the area where teachers face difficulty in continuous assessment practice. Because, teachers have no time to help and coordinate each students activity in 40 minute. In that, half of the time (about 20 minute) is covered by plasma presentation.
5. The support and facilitation activity from the school administrative and other stakeholder is low. According to the results of interview question with teachers, they responded that because of lack of awareness, material constraint and the like, there is no support from school administration. School principals and woreda supervisors also confirm what the teachers respond to the question. They reply that some times, only they try to give some awareness for teachers, which is not adequate.
6. Students' absenteeism is another main factor which challenge in the practice of continuous assessment. Whenever students are left from school, it is impossible to assess students on continuous basis. So, teachers are unable to have full profile of each student in a class through continuous assessment.
7. Lack of uniform and consistent continuous assessment result recording habits among teachers;
8. Lack of commitment of teachers and the beliefs of teachers on summative evaluation;

5.1.3 Solutions suggested by respondents for continuous assessment practice problems

Respondents were asked to suggest possible solutions for the problems they mentioned; consequently they forwarded the following solutions.

1. Improve teachers' and students' attitude towards continuous assessment through awareness creation programs, such as conducting workshops, seminars, arranging regular experience sharing program.
2. Motivating teachers by providing moral incentives such as further training in their field, and material incentives- salary increments, career structure etc based on their performance.
3. Practical and intensive training for teachers
4. Provision of guidance and counseling

5.2. CONCLUSIONS

In light of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

There is no doubt that well practiced continuous assessments have a valuable asset to the schools and thereby increases the students' performance by providing necessary information about their progression. With this understanding, the high schools understudy has practiced continuous assessment. These high schools could not strictly follow all the methods of practicing continuous assessment processes. The implementation of these processes is shown as follows:

1. Most teachers have no training regarding continuous assessment neither in pre-service nor in their in service program. This makes teachers not to have the knowledge of continuous assessment which makes them not to practice as intended. Though few teachers took the training, due to some other problems related to school factors (lack instructional material, time constraint) they were not practiced it well. So, the practice of continuous assessment in secondary schools of Oromia Special zone is low.
2. Though it seems that some teachers integrate continuous assessment in their lesson plan, there is a gap to implement what they plan in their lesson. Teachers prepare continuous assessment lesson plan because of that they asked by their department heads. The plans itself lack the procedures and different techniques by which continuous assessment practiced.
3. Using different continuous assessment techniques is not adaptable in most teachers' activity. Almost all teachers use only paper and pencil test to assess their students. Students cannot get a chance to show their performance through different techniques. The effort made in this regard is low.
4. Students pointed out that their teachers did not involve them to know how their assessments were going to be scored or graded. This in turn made students conclude that their teachers were unfair about marking and did not use continuous assessment for guiding their learning.
5. There were no provision of continuous assessment guidelines and ground rules in teaching learning activities to assess learners' theoretical concepts and practical skills. In the absence of guide line it is difficult to use continuous assessment to assess

students in meaningful way. In addition, lack of continuous assessment guide line, makes the process of implementation not uniform in schools.

6. Even though, some schools try to provide some materials by their own for teachers, most teachers have no any materials which assist the practice of continuous assessment.
7. One of the most important for teachers' good performance is the support that made from school administration. As the study result shows, concerning continuous assessment, support from school is not something which brought a change in the teachers' performance.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the concern of educational leaders and/or researchers to create favorable condition for the good implementation of continuous assessment in schools. This study on the state of continuous assessment practice will contribute to the effective implementation of continuous assessment. Taking the findings of this study into account, the researcher has forwarded the following recommendations to the stakeholders.

1. Providing clear and understandable (which includes procedures for assessment tool preparation) manuals and guidelines for the front line practitioners of continuous assessment-for teachers, principals and supervisors is what the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureau should take the prime role.
2. Practical and incentive training for both teacher and student should be provided to change their knowledge, attitude and skills of continuous assessment. Specifically the training should focus on:
 - Selected and challenged topics from each course those were not easy for continuous assessment practices.
 - How and when to provide feedback for students,
 - How and when to practice self and peer assessment,

This could be done by model teachers and invited experts from higher officials.

3. Teachers are expected to plan and involve students by providing tasks in the continuous form.
4. Materials are crucial for the practice of the matter. There should be material (reference books, laboratory equipments, different assessment formats) provision to assist the practice of continuous assessment from the concerned body.
5. Continuous assessment task force should be formed to follow and supervise continuous assessment activities, to facilitate and prepare a forum in every semester concerning the strength and weakness of continuous assessment activities and to collect some mechanisms for continuous assessment practices improvement. In addition to this, to facilitate experience sharing among departments and with other colleagues. This could be done by principals.

6. School administrator, and department heads should include the issue of practicing continuous assessment in their plan and make a discussion and set an objective with teacher prior the starting of practice.
7. School administrators and woreda educational experts expected to give timely constructive support for teachers as well as for students to enhance the practice.
8. Woreda Education Office and School administrators should provide incentives for teachers to motivate them in the course of continuous assessment practice.
9. Involving students in continuous assessment process helps them to take responsibility, develop confidence, to broaden their knowledge, attitude and skills. So, they should be involved more than the present in the process of continuous assessment activity to improve the practice.
10. Further research could be conducted specially on the comparison of continuous assessment practice between administrative town and rural woreda.

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Appendices

Appendix A ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDY

Institution of Educational Research /IER/

Department of Educational Research and Development

Questionnaire of Teachers

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about the practice and state of continuous assessment in Oromia Special Zone. The researcher asked you to cooperate in giving your response towards the stated question.

Thank you very much.

Part I. The main data information

Circle the letter which you think of the answer and give explanation where it is required.

1. Have you taken a course about assessment particularly in continuous assessment in pre service program?

a) yes b) no

2. Did you take any training on the implementation of continuous assessment in your in service program

a) yes b) no

3. If your answer for question no 2 is "yes" for how many days did you take a course?

a) one day b) three day c) a week d) a month

4. Do you use continuous assessment plan in your lesson? a) yes b) no
5. How often do you incorporate continuous assessment techniques in to your lesson plan?
- a) always b) sometimes c) rarely d) not at all
6. If your answer for question no 4 is “yes” at which stage of the instructional process do you assessed?
- a) at the beginning of the lesson b) while learning is going on
- c) after the end of the lesson d) at each stage (before, doing and after the lesson)
7. If your response for question no 4 is “yes” why?
- a. to assess and improve students’ learning activity
- b. to know how much the students understand the content
- c. to develop the students participation
8. If your response for question no 4 is “no’ why?
- a. it takes time and the lesson is given by plasma
- b. shortage of materials
- c. large class size
- d. lack of awareness
9. Did you use different types of continuous assessment in the teaching and learning to assess your students learning? a. yes b. no
10. How often do you involve your students in the assessment process?
- a) Always b) sometimes c) rarely d) not at all

11. Do you provide feedback to your students?

- a) Yes b) no

12. If your response for question no 11 is "yes" what was its frequency?

- a) in each continuous assessment tasks
b) when test papers returned to the students
c) at the end of the semester/course

13. If your response for question no 12 is "no" what was your reasons?

- a) Lack of time to cover the topic b) no need for feedback
c) Students are not interested when you told their weakness
d) if any other _____

14. In assessing your students' performance is there any guiding principles supplied by the school? a) yes b) no

15. What is the document you use to manage and implement continuous assessment in your school?

- a) Only assessment format given from school
b) Assessment guide line developed at school level
c) Guideline developed at department level
d) No, because, I have got full professional development through past training

16. To what extent the school administration help teachers in implementing continuous assessment? a) Very high b) high c) average d) below overage e) never

Part II. Give your response clearly

17. What is the state of continuous assessment practice in your school currently? _____

18. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder the effective practice of continuous assessment in your school?

A) **Positive** **factors**

B) **negative** **factors**

19. What should be done to improve the current practice continuous assessment practice in your school?

Part III. Indicate by “✓” tick the assessment techniques you use to assess your student on the space provided.

No	Assessment methods	Use always	Some times	When necessary	Don't use	Total
1.	Class work					
2.	Home work					
3.	Observation					
4.	Oral question					
5.	Group discussion					
6.	Presentation					
7.	Reflection					
8.	Peer assessment					
9.	Self assessment					
10.	Project work					
11.	Quizzes					
12.	Test (paper & pencil)					
13.	Interviews					
14.	Exam/mid and final					
15.	Others					

Part IV. General Information

1. Name of the school _____
2. Sex: M _____ F _____
3. Age: a) 20-25 yrb) 26-30 yrc) 31-35 yrd) 36-40 yre) 41 and above
4. Your qualification
 - a) Diploma _____
 - b) BA/Bed/BSC _____
 - c) MA _____
 - d) Please indicate if other than the above _____
5. Teaching experience in the high school
 - a) 0-3 yrb) 4-7 yrc) 8-11 yrd) 12-16 yre) 17 and above
6. Teaching load per week
 - a) below 10c) 16-21
 - b) 10-15d) 22 and above

Appendix B
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDY

Institution of Educational Research /IER/

Department of Educational Research and Evaluation

Questionnaire for Students

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about the practice and state of continuous assessment in Oromia Special Zone. The researcher asked you to cooperate in giving your response towards the stated question. Your response contribute much to the success of the research to be under taken, Hence you are kindly requested to fill the questionnaire.

Thank you very much!

Part I. Main data information

Circle the letter which you think of the answer and give explanation where it is required.

1. Are you willing to do assessment activities? a) yes b) no
2. If you are not willing to do assessment activities, what is your reason?
 - a) continuous assessment is time consuming
 - b) continuous assessment is not effective to measure different performance
 - c) All group members did not provide equal contribution in different group
 - d) tests and final exams are better than continuous assessment to measure individual progress in learning
3. Do your teacher use different types of continuous assessment like (individual work, presentation, peer assessment, project work etc) in their lesson? a) Yes b) no

4. Do teachers inform you about the assessment process? a) Yes b) no
5. Which of the following assessment techniques do most teachers use regularly?
- a) Oral questions b) project work c) group work d) individual work
e) tests
6. Are there opportunities given for student to evaluate their peer assessment tasks?
- a) yes b) no
7. If your answer for question no 7 is "yes" please indicate the assessment tasks and the condition under which it was done.
- _____
- _____
- _____
8. Is there timely feedback for students in relation to their continuous assessment results? a) yes b) no
9. If your answer for question no 9 is "yes" what was its frequency?
- a) in each continuous assessment tasks b) when test paper returned to the student
c) at the end of the semester d) if any other _____

Part II. Give your response clearly

10. What is the state of continuous assessment practice in your school currently? _____

11. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder the effective practice of continuous assessment in your school?

A) positive factors

B) negative factors

12. What should be done to improve the current practice continuous assessment practice in your school? _____

Part III. Indicate by “✓” tick the assessment techniques your teacher use to assess students’ performance on the space provided.

No	Assessment methods	Use always	Some times	When necessary	Don't use	Total
1.	Class work					
2.	Home work					
3.	Observation					
4.	Oral question					
5.	Group discussion					
6.	Presentation					
7.	Reflection					
8.	Peer assessment					
9.	Self assessment					
10.	Project work					
11.	Quizzes					
12.	Test (paper & pencil)					
13.	Interviews					
14.	Exam					
15.	Others					

Part IV General Information

1. Name of the school _____

2. Sex M____ F____

3. Age a) 14-16 b) 17-19 c) 20-22 d) more than 23

4. Grade a) 9th____ b)10th____

Appendix C
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDY

Institution of Educational Research /IER/

Department of Educational Research and Evaluation

Interview for Teacher

The purpose of this interview is to obtain information about the practice and state of continuous assessment in Oromia Special Zone. The researcher asked you to cooperate in giving your response towards the stated question. Your response contribute much to the success of the research to be under taken,

1. What is the state of continuous assessment practice in your school?
2. Some people say continuous assessment enables learners simply to pass from grade to grade as they are not properly assessed. How do you react this?
3. How do students react when they are being assessed continuously?
4. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder the practice of continuous assessment in your school?
5. Would you suggest possible solutions that help to minimize the problems behind continuous assessment?
6. Is there any point that you would like to raise in relation to the assessment of students in high school?

Appendix D
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDY

Institution of Educational Research /IER/

Department of Educational Research and Evaluation

Semi structured interview with school principal, vice principal and supervisor

The purpose of this interview is to obtain information about the practice and state of continuous assessment in Oromia Special Zone. The researcher asked you to cooperate in giving your response towards the stated question. Your response contributes much to the success of the research to be under taken.

General information.

1. Sex _____ Qualification _____

2. Age _____ Years of service _____

1. As you already know it is clearly stated in the Education and Training policy (1994), that continuous assessment should be practiced in school;

a) In relation to this, what is the state of continuous assessment practice in your school/woreda? At what level it is practiced? b) How do you have check whether teachers are implementing it or not?

b) What support do you provide for teachers to practice it?

2. Does the school/woreda, provide guide lines, formats and the necessary material to facilitate continuous assessment practice?

3. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder the practice of continuous assessment in your school?

4. What should be done for the successful practices of continuous assessment in your school/ woreda?

5. What do you say about the contribution of continuous assessment for the improvement of teaching-learning activities?