

# Conceptualization and Implementation of Continuous Assessment in Tanzania: Fit for the purpose?

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Continuous assessment in Tanzania aims at ensuring that students' learning is continually assessed and incorporated into the final grade attained at the end of schooling. This study explored the conceptualization and implementation of continuous assessment in secondary schools in Tanzania. A questionnaire developed by the researcher was used to collect data from a total of 4,160 secondary school teachers who participated in the marking of the Certificate of Secondary School Examination in 2013. Findings of the study revealed that the traditional methods of assessment, such as tests, class exercises and quizzes, are dominantly used methods of continuous assessment. Statistically significant differences were found in the teachers' frequency of use of assessment methods and the type of subject taught. In contrast, there were no statistically significant differences in the frequency of use of assessment method by the qualification of teachers. Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences in the method of continuous assessment used by teachers and the number of students in a class, possibly because of the confounding effect of the workload of teachers. In some schools teachers with small number of students had a heavy teaching load which outweighed the benefits of having a small class in conducting assessment. The study concludes that conceptualization of continuous assessment is limited mainly to administration of tests that are not even constructed in schools. This practice raises a question of whether the conceptualization and implementation of continuous assessment in secondary schools fulfill the purpose for which it was meant to serve. It is essential to re-conceptualize continuous assessment in line with assessment for learning so that the implementation of continuous assessment in schools contributes to improved learning outcomes. Accordingly, sustained professional development of teachers is necessary to enable them use assessment to support students' learning.

**Keywords:** Continuous assessment, formative assessment, curriculum, school environment, students' learning

## INTRODUCTION

Assessment plays a crucial role in informing teaching and supporting learning (Gronlund, 2006; Stiggins & Chappius, 2005; Shepard, 2000; Harris, 2007; Rea-Dickins, 2006). It involves the process the process of gathering, synthesizing and interpreting information to assist in decision-making, including instructional decisions (Airasan, 2001). Continuous assessment entails a variety of classroom activities and tasks used to determine students' progress in learning and to regulate teaching and learning (De Lisle, 2013, Kapambwe, 2010, Airasian, 2001; Gronlund, 2006; McMillan, 2008; Popham, 2008). Teachers use a variety of assessment instruments such as written tests, performance assessment, observation and portfolios to gather information about teaching and learning. The assessment methods used and the quality of feedback provided have influence on the learning outcomes attained by students (Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003; Clarke, 2003; Gonzale & Fuggan, 2012). Accordingly, teachers have a great potential of enhancing students' learning through the use of relevant assessment methods.

The secondary school curriculum in Tanzania stipulates the kind of assessment methods that teachers are expected to use in the course of implementing curriculum. The secondary school curriculum states that "assessment shall emphasize the competence based teaching and learning. The methods used shall probe students' understanding, reasoning and critical thinking

rather than their ability to memorize facts” (Tanzania Institute of Education, 2007 p. 32). Some of assessment methods suggested include portfolios, performance assessment, observation, oral presentations, project work, practical tasks and written essays. Teachers are expected to use multiple methods of assessment to ensure comprehensive information is obtained to facilitate both teaching and learning. The use of multiple method of assessment is recommended due to its potentiality in yielding valuable information regarding students’ strengths and weaknesses in their learning (McMillan, 2000, Gonzales & Fuggan, 2012) and in informing teachers about relevant activities and tasks that are important for scaffolding learning (McMillan, 2008, Shepard, 2000).

### **Conceptualization of Continuous Assessment in Tanzania**

Continuous assessment was formally incorporated into the National Examinations system in Tanzania in 1976 following a political directive of the then ruling party Tanganyika African National Union (TANU):

*“the excessive emphasis placed in the national examinations must be reduced, and that students’ progress in the classroom plus his performance of other functions and the work which they will do as part of their education must all be continuously assessed and the combined result is what constitute students’ success or failure”* (TANU, 1974, para 47, cited by NECTA, 2003).

The National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA) in collaboration with other key education institutions conceptualized how the continuous assessment directive could be translated into practice. Benchmarking visits were done to Cuba, China and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to study about their assessment procedures especially on the aspect of characters and attitudes toward work (NECTA, 2003). Based on the consultative process, successful students’ learning in school was conceptually defined to include three components: (i) written examinations, (ii) school-based assessment and (iii) the character and attitudes toward work (NECTA, 1991).

The school-based assessment, popularly known as continuous assessment was assigned a weight of 50% of the Final Examinations marks although the actual score incorporated was based on standardization against final examination score. The components of continuous assessment included (i) Classroom exercises, Homework, class tests, quizzes (20%), (ii) Terminal tests (25%) and (iii) three project work (5%) (NECTA, 2003, p. 47). It can be seen that tests were given greater weight than other assessment components. In contrast, awarding 5% for three projects is an indication of low importance attached to that method of assessment despite demands involved in doing quality project and the value in terms of students learning. The conceptualization of continuous assessment was guided mainly by the requirements for teachers to submit scores for incorporation into the final examination score. The focus of continuous assessment for enhancing learning was not evident.

Conceptualization of character and attitude towards work led to the following seven attributes that were assessed in schools:

- i) Diligence – conduct of applying effort with consistency, enthusiasm, perseverance, efficiency and producing satisfactory amount of work.*
- ii) Valuing work – conduct of showing interest in one’s work regardless of its nature.*
- iii) Caring for property – the conduct of applying care in handling property and safeguarding it from loss or damage.*

- iv) *Sociability – conduct of promoting social harmony and understanding, consideration of other people’s view points and feelings, and of being accommodating.*
- v) *Obedience – conduct of obeying lawful orders willingly and following instructions faithfully.*
- vi) *Honesty – conduct of being faithful, trustworthy and behaving properly, avoiding cheating and departing from duties only when work ends or after completing duty;*
- vii) *Cleanliness – conduct of being neat, orderly and tidy in appearance and presentation as well as caring for personal hygiene (See NECTA, 2003, p.48-49).*

Enforcing positive character and attitude towards work was seen as a crucial element for success of students in school and life after graduation. A minimum score of 40% was a requirement for one to be awarded a certificate of secondary education. Thus, the character and attitude towards work component was seen as the most important requirement. Classroom based assessment as well as the final national examination could not enable a student to be certified a certificate of secondary education examination regardless of their performance in other components.

### **Challenges in implementation of Continuous assessment**

During the initial years of implementing continuous assessment, there were challenges encountered especially with regard to the authenticity of scores awarded for character and attitudes toward work. This was partly because the seven attributes forming character and attitudes towards work were not operationally defined in a manner that would facilitate uniformity in the implementation. Furthermore, there was a tendency for some teachers to victimize students who were not in good terms with them by giving them a lower score in character than they actually deserved. Teachers had that upper hand on students since obtaining a pass in character assessment was a prerequisite condition for certification of secondary education examination.

There were also challenges in the implementation of the academic component of the continuous assessment. The requirement for teachers to provide class exercises, quizzes, tests and other assignments on a continuous basis was considered by teachers as too ambitious and as a destructor from regular teaching (NECTA, 2003). Teachers tended to view assessment as an isolated aspect of teaching rather than an integral part that supports and nurtures learning. The view that continuous assessment was a destructor to their work and lack of integrity by some teachers resulted into a tendency to submit inflated continuous assessment scores. These challenges are not unique to Tanzania. Other countries implementing continuous assessment scheme in which the scores are integrated into the final grade of students have experienced similar challenges (see for example Ayodele, 2012; Kapambwe, 2010; De Lisle, 2013).

In view of the challenges experienced in the implementation of continuous assessment, the guidelines for conducting continuous assessment in schools and colleges were revised (NECTA, 1991). The main revision included the reduction of the number of classroom-based assessment and incorporation of the national form II examination scores as part of continuous assessment. Conceptually, the revision made was a significant departure from the initial objective of introducing continuous assessment, notably reducing the weight assigned to external examination and give more emphasis to classroom-based assessment conducted in schools. Pass in the character and attitude towards work was no longer a prerequisite for award of the certificate secondary education examination. Teachers were encouraged to continue with

assessment of character as a means of enhancing positive attitude. Furthermore, the number of projects was reduced from three to one although the weighting remained 5%. The continuous assessment package consisted of: (i) National form II examination score, three terminal tests administered in form III and IV and (iii) one project work from the subject of choice. Unlike the previous practice where the weight for terminal tests and class exercises were treated separately, the national form II examination score and terminal tests were combined and given a weight of 45% while the project work weighted 5% (NECTA, 1991). Continuous assessment scores were subjected to standardization before incorporation to the final score grade (NECTA, 2003).

The revision made reduced the weight assigned to school-based assessment and introduces externally constructed examination as part of continuous assessment. This was contrary to the initial intention of reducing over-emphasis in written examination. The use of external tests as the main source of continuous scores assessment defeats the purpose for which continuous assessment was meant to serve and undermines the role of teachers in enhancing learning through appropriate assessment approaches. Despite reducing the weight of school-based continuous assessment scores, challenges associated with the unreliability of continuous assessment scores remained unresolved. The situation was compounded by increased number of private secondary schools whose survival depends on performance of their students.

The massive expansion of secondary schools in the mid 2000s was not immediately matched with the provision of relevant teaching and learning materials and sufficient qualified teachers. This created huge differences in the learning environments coupled with lack of integrity among some teachers and insufficient knowledge to construct appropriate school-based assessment. The quality of continuous assessment conducted could not be ascertained and the possibility for some schools to submit inflated or even “cooked scores” could not be ruled out. Thus, determining the appropriate modality of using continuous assessment scores and the question as to whether it fits the purpose for which it was established remained a matter of debate among education stakeholders.

The attempts to find the best way of incorporating continuous assessment in the final grade led to the revision done in 2014 in which a school-based assessment component was completely removed. Continuous assessment consists of the national form II examination, Form IV Mock examination and one project. The terminal tests have been replaced by Mock examination; and the weighting of continuous assessment versus final examination scores has been changed from 50:50 to 30:70. The revisions aimed at minimizing the effects of inflated continuous assessment scores on the integrity of certificates offered by the National Examinations Council of Tanzania. However, The standardization of CA is no longer done despite the looming concerns on the comparability of the scores.

### **Objectives of the study**

Effective teaching and learning cannot be achieved without proper continuous assessment. Given the changes in conceptualization of continuous assessment, the main purpose of the study was to explore the assessment methods used by teachers and the ways in which they use assessment information. The study was guided by the following research question:

1. Which methods of continuous assessment do secondary school teachers frequently use?

2. Are there significant differences in the frequency of use of assessment methods by qualification; type of subjects taught; and by class size?
3. What are teachers' prevalent uses information generated from continuous assessment?

## Methodology

A survey method was adopted for the study because the main purpose was to gather information related to teachers' implementation of continuous assessment. Thus survey was considered appropriate due to its capability in gathering information from a large sample in a relatively short period of time. A questionnaire developed by the researcher was used for the study. It consisted of items related to demographic information of the participants, assessment methods used and the use of assessment information. Assessment methods contained in the questionnaire were drawn mainly from the secondary school curriculum (Tanzania Institute of Education, 2007). Using a six point scale where *1 - reflects daily, 2- weekly, 3-monthly, 4 – once a term, 5 – once a year and 6 – Never*, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency in which they use each method in their classrooms. For items concerning use of assessment information, participants were asked to indicate the frequency in which each statement was applicable to them, using *1 – Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 4 – Often and 5 – Very often*. In order to ascertain the quality and appropriateness of the questionnaire developed, three experts were asked to review and comment on the initial version of the questionnaire. Their comments were incorporated in the final version of the questionnaire.

### Participants of the Study

The study involved teachers who participated in the marking of the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination 2013. Teachers involved in the marking exercise are normally required to have teaching experience of at least three years and are drawn from all the regions in the country. It was therefore considered that they constituted reasonably representative sample secondary schools teachers. A questionnaire was distributed to a total of 4330 teachers who were requested to participate in the study based on the subjects they were marking. Returned completed questionnaires were 4160. The profile of teachers who returned the questionnaire shows that there were 1730 science teachers and 2430 Arts teachers. In terms of qualifications, 1772 teachers were diploma holders while 2272 teachers were degree holders.

### Type of Assessment Methods frequently used by teachers

Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency in which they use various assessment types using a six point scale in which *1 - reflects daily use, 2- weekly, 3- monthly, 4 – Once a term, 5 – Once a year and 6 – Never*. During the analysis, the key was reversed so that a large number is associated with the high frequency of use of the method. Descriptive statistics of the responses provided by participants were computed and are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Frequency of Use of Various Assessment Methods**

| Assessment Method | N    | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------|------|------|----------------|
| Class exercises   | 4055 | 5.30 | .75            |
| Homework          | 4110 | 5.06 | .82            |
| Quizzes           | 4079 | 4.71 | 1.25           |
| Observation       | 4067 | 4.25 | 1.80           |
| Tests             | 4049 | 4.15 | .63            |
| Practical         | 4061 | 3.44 | 1.59           |
| Portfolios        | 3944 | 2.30 | 1.56           |
| Projects          | 4073 | 2.28 | .92            |

Table 1 shows that the most frequently used assessment methods include class exercises, homework, quizzes, tests and observation. This suggests that teachers realize the important of assessment beyond generating scores for incorporation in the final examination. However, methods of assessment used by secondary school teachers are predominantly traditional methods. Assessment methods that require extensive involvement of both teachers and students were not frequently used. As shown in Table 1, project was the least frequently used method of assessment followed by portfolios.

This finding concurs with Ndalichako (2004) who found that the predominant forms of assessment by primary school teachers included class exercises, tests and quizzes and homework. The similarities observed in the frequency of assessment methods used by primary and secondary school teachers in Tanzania can be attributed to the nature of their pre-service training. Issues related to assessment are not adequately covered for both primary and secondary school teachers' training. Assessment is not a full-fledged course; it is a small component of which focus mainly on the large scale standardized tests as opposed to assessment for learning. Other studies in Sub-saharan Africa also show that classroom assessment practices by teachers are characterized by use of traditional methods through the use of tests, quizzes and examinations (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007; World Bank, 2008; Kanjee, 2009).

### **The frequency of assessment methods used by type of subject taught**

The study attempted to explore whether there were differences in terms of methods of assessment by the type of subject taught. Subjects taught were categorized into two main clusters namely Science (N= 1730) and Arts subject (N = 2430). The descriptive statistics and t-test values for the methods of assessment used are presented in Table 2:

**Table 2: Mean Frequency of the use of assessment methods by type of subject taught**

| Assessment Method | Science Teachers |          | Arts Teachers |          | t     | sig  |
|-------------------|------------------|----------|---------------|----------|-------|------|
|                   | Mean             | Std. Dev | Mean          | Std. Dev |       |      |
| Class exercises   | 5.33             | .76      | 5.26          | .75      | 2.90  | .004 |
| Homework          | 5.17             | .80      | 4.98          | .83      | 7.31  | .000 |
| Quizzes           | 4.65             | 1.30     | 4.76          | 1.22     | -2.83 | .005 |
| Projects          | 2.23             | .86      | 2.31          | .96      | -2.91 | .004 |
| Tests             | 4.13             | .60      | 4.17          | .65      | -1.69 | .092 |
| Observation       | 4.39             | 1.77     | 4.16          | 1.81     | 4.09  | .000 |
| Practical         | 3.93             | 1.42     | 3.09          | 1.61     | 17.36 | .000 |
| Portfolios        | 2.20             | 1.55     | 2.37          | 1.57     | -3.47 | .001 |

Table 2 shows that Science teachers tended to use class exercises, homework, observation and practical methods more often than Arts teachers. On the other hand, Arts teachers tended to use Quizzes, portfolios, and projects more often than Science teachers. With the exception of the use of tests, findings show that there were significant differences in terms of the frequency of use of various assessment methods by Arts and Science teachers. The differences in the methods used can partly be explained by the nature of the subject taught. In science for example, the practical component is emphasized to enable students confirm theories learned. Nevertheless, the mean difference, in absolute values, even for practical was not significantly different for Arts and Science teachers. This can be attributed to the fact that not all students who take science subjects are actually doing practical. The Education Policy in Tanzania allows students in schools with no laboratory facilities to do what is called *alternative to practical* in which teachers narrate what is likely to happen as a result of a certain experiment.

Consequently, even students taking science subjects may not do any actual practical, as it is the case for students taking Arts subjects. The t-test performed revealed significant differences at .05 for all methods of assessment used except for the frequency of use of tests.

### The Frequency of Use of assessment methods by qualification of teachers

The study explored whether there were significant differences in terms of methods of assessment by the qualification of teachers. Qualifications were categorized into two main clusters namely Diploma (N= 1772) and Degree (N = 2271). The descriptive statistics and t-test values for the method of assessment used by qualification of teachers are presented in Table 3

**Table 3: Mean Frequency of the use of assessment methods by science and Degree and Diploma holder Teachers**

| Assessment Method | Teachers with Diploma |          | Teachers with Degree |          | t     | df   |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|-------|------|
|                   | Mean                  | Std. Dev | Mean                 | Std. Dev |       |      |
| Class exercises   | 5.33                  | .74      | 5.27                 | .76      | 2.40  | .016 |
| Homework          | 5.12                  | .77      | 5.01                 | .86      | 4.09  | .000 |
| Quizzes           | 4.73                  | 1.27     | 4.72                 | 1.25     | .33   | .741 |
| Projects          | 2.23                  | .94      | 2.28                 | .92      | .41   | .685 |
| Tests             | 4.17                  | .64      | 4.14                 | .63      | 1.44  | .151 |
| Observation       | 4.20                  | 1.78     | 4.29                 | 1.81     | -1.72 | .085 |
| Practical         | 3.56                  | 1.54     | 3.35                 | 1.61     | 4.10  | .000 |
| Portfolios        | 2.25                  | 1.52     | 2.34                 | 1.60     | -1.76 | .085 |

Table 3 shows that there were no substantial differences in terms of assessment methods used by degree and diploma teachers. This can be attributed to the fact that in the pre-service training for both degree and diploma teachers, the issue of classroom assessment is not given due emphasis. The focus is mainly on measurement and evaluation of large scale standardised tests.

### Frequency of Use of Assessment Method by Class size

The study also explored whether there were differences in the frequency of use of assessment methods by class size. The findings are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Mean Frequency of the use of assessment methods by Class size**

| Method of assessment | 40 or less Students |          | 41-60 Students |          | More than 60 |          |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------|----------------|----------|--------------|----------|
|                      | Mean                | Std. Dev | Mean           | Std. Dev | Mean         | Std. Dev |
| Class exercises      | 5.30                | .79      | 5.34           | .71      | 5.26         | .77      |
| Homework             | 5.04                | .85      | 5.09           | .84      | 5.04         | .82      |
| Quizzes              | 4.59                | 1.36     | 4.78           | 1.24     | 4.72         | 1.23     |
| Project              | 2.26                | .87      | 2.33           | .94      | 2.26         | .92      |
| Tests                | 4.20                | .63      | 4.18           | .62      | 4.13         | .63      |
| Observation          | 4.16                | 1.81     | 4.30           | 1.76     | 4.27         | 1.80     |
| Practical            | 3.37                | 1.63     | 3.53           | 1.56     | 3.43         | 1.60     |
| Portfolios           | 2.28                | 1.57     | 2.29           | 1.55     | 2.32         | 1.57     |

Table 4 shows that the mean frequency of the use of various assessment method by class size are not substantially different in absolute values. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to establish whether or not there were significant differences in terms of the method of assessment used by the number of students in the class. The one-way ANOVA

results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: The ANOVA values for classroom assessment by class size**

| Methods of assessment | F     | Sig values |
|-----------------------|-------|------------|
| Class exercises       | 3.837 | .022       |
| Homework              | 1.427 | .240       |
| Quizzes               | 4.093 | .017       |
| Project               | 2.160 | .115       |
| Tests                 | 3.365 | .035       |
| Observation           | 1.176 | .309       |
| Practical             | 2.439 | .087       |
| Portfolios            | .237  | .789       |

Table 5 shows a significant difference at .05 in terms of the frequency of use of class exercises, quizzes and tests while no significant differences were found for the rest of assessment methods. Ideally, class size was expected to affect the method of assessment used as it has implications in terms of time required for marking and the quality of feedback that a teacher can offer. However, teachers' workload may account for the observed insignificant differences in the sense that teachers with large class size may have low teaching load compared to those with large classes since the method of assessment used is affected by both class size and workload of teachers.

### How do teachers use assessment information?

The study explored how teachers use information they generate from continuous assessment. Possible uses of assessment information were provided. Participants were asked to indicate the frequency in which they use each of the assessment method using *1 – Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 4 – Often and 5 – Very often*. Results are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Use of Assessment Information**

| Use of Assessment  | N    | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|------|------|----------------|
| I use assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching                  | 3957 | 4.39 | .79            |
| I use assessment data to provide remedial teaching for low achieving students  | 3967 | 3.73 | 1.11           |
| I use assessment results to give advice to students and parents                | 3969 | 4.15 | .90            |
| I use assessment data to punish students who do not meet the expected standard | 3961 | 2.56 | 1.23           |
| I use assessment data to help students to improve their grades                 | 3963 | 4.17 | .84            |
| I use assessment to diagnose learning difficulties encountered by students     | 3962 | 4.18 | .85            |

Responses of the teachers presented in Table 6 indicate that the most predominant uses of assessment were in *evaluating the effectiveness of teaching, diagnosis of learning difficulties encountered by students* and in *providing advice to students and parents*. The use of assessment in *providing remedial teaching for low achieving students* is not as frequently used as others (Mean = 3.73, S.D = 1.11). The item *"I use assessment information to punish students who do not meet required standard"* has a mean of 2.56 and standard deviation of 1.23



indicating that a couple of teachers use assessment to punish students who do not meet expected standard. Such use of assessment to punish students may have negative effects on their motivation to learn. Instead of assisting them to improve performance, punishing low attaining students may discourage them even in striving to understand what is taught. Teachers ought to support learning through appropriate instruction rather than punishing students who are not learning at the pace they are expecting them to learn.

## **Discussion**

Continuous assessment was introduced in Tanzania to broaden the scope of assessing students learning and ensure that their final grade is not based on examinations only. Since inception, the implementation of continuous assessment was faced with challenges that necessitated revision of the guidelines in 1991. Nevertheless, the revision made did not resolve the root cause of the emerged challenges. The focus was rather on reducing the number of school-based assessment because it was not implemented as suggested and there was inflation of scores. Further revision done in 2014 led to removal of terminal tests which were school-based assessment. Essentially, in its current conceptualization, continuous assessment is composed of two external examinations: Form II National and Form IV Mock Examination. How do the two external examinations used fulfill the desire to ensure learners' success in schools is continually assessed? This brings in the issue fairness to students who do not do well in the national Form II examinations. They are double-disadvantaged because the low score obtained is used in Form IV final grading. Has the purpose for which continuous assessment was introduced in Tanzania been fulfilled?

The use of continuous assessment scores without standardization poses a threat to the integrity of the certificates of secondary education that are offered. Schools in Tanzania, as it is the case in most Sub-saharan Africa differ significantly in terms of learning environment, availability of teaching and learning materials, quality of teachers and even the quality of students enrolled. The authenticity and comparability of continuous assessment scores generated by schools are highly questionable. Although in the current conception school-based assessment has no contribution to the final score, the comparability of Form 4 Mock examinations is also a matter of concern given that each zone sets and administers their own examination. Difficulty levels of items, different examination administration conditions and lenience or strictness in marking could compromise the validity of scores obtained.

The implementation of continuous assessment in Sub-saharan Africa has faced a lot of challenges which emanate from the dual-role that continuous assessment was meant to serve; enhancing learning and incorporating the scores for certification purposes. However, the inclusion of continuous assessment in the final grade for certification tends to override the key purpose of enhancing learning. This is especially the case because a certificate in secondary education examination is seen as a gate pass to educational and employment opportunities. Besides, examination results are used for accountability purposes, which compel teachers to focus mainly on means of assisting students to pass examinations rather than to enhance learning. The use of classroom assessment to enhance learning is constrained by a lack of capacity for teachers to design and implement effective assessment tasks (Chulu, 2013, Ayodele, 2012; Kanjee, 2009) and non-uniformity in the quality of assessment instrument.

Teachers are also faced with competing and conflicting demands for school based assessment. While the secondary school curriculum calls for integration of assessment in the classroom

instruction and encourage use of a variety of approaches such as performance assessment, portfolios, continuous assessment components specified by the National Examinations Council of Tanzania is based on scores generated from external tests only. As observed by McMillan (2000), assessment decision-making is influenced by a series of tension including the use of assessment to motivate and engage students in learning versus the use of assessment as a means for preparing students for their national examinations at the end of schooling. Given the high-stakes attached to the national examinations results, teachers' assessment decisions tend to lean mainly on preparation of students for their final examinations. In Malawi for example, Chulu (2013) noted that teachers tended to imitate the format of national examinations in their school-based assessment.

## Conclusion

The high stakes associated with examinations in Tanzania, as it is the case in most Sub Saharan Africa, has a great influence on assessment methods used and ultimately on the quality of teaching and learning. The national examination results are like a gate pass to various opportunities. Students who do not pass secondary education examination are left with limited opportunities in academic and career life. Under such circumstances, teachers tend to view assessment as a means for preparing children to succeed in national examinations rather than viewing assessment as a means for enhancing teaching and learning.

It is evident that the directive for introducing continuous assessment, which stemmed from the need to incorporate school-based assessment, is hardly implemented. In the revised guidelines for continuous assessment, project for one subject is the only remaining component that reflects school-based assessment. That means scores for other subjects in which students have not opted to do a project work, are only based on the two external kind of assessment; Form II national examination and Form IV mock examination. There is a need to re-conceptualize continuous assessment in line with assessment for learning so that the purpose of introducing continuous assessment is achieved. Capacity building for teachers is needed to enable them communicate learning goals and the assessment criteria to their students and provide feedback that will enable students to realize where they are in terms of achieving their learning goals and what they need to go to achieve the goals.

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