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Perception of Teacher Trainees on the Implementation of Continuous Assessment in National Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka

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යිමුහයකුගේ කාර්ය සාධනය පිළිබඳ විනිශ්චය කිරීමේ ක්‍රියාවලිය ලෙස තක්සේරුව සැලකේ. සිපුත්තේ කාර්ය සාධනය සහ ජයග්‍රහණ ඇගයීමට විධිමත් පරීක්ෂණ, අවිධිමත් පරීක්ෂණ, ලිඛිත පරීක්ෂණ, වාචික පරීක්ෂණ, ප්‍රායෝගික පරීක්ෂණ මෙන් ම පන්ති කාමර පාදක වැනි විවිධ ඇගයීම් ක්‍රම භාවිත කෙරේ. මෙම අධ්‍යයනයෙන් ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන විද්‍යාපියයන්හි ක්‍රියාත්මක අඛණ්ඩ ඇගයීම් ක්‍රියාවලිය පිළිබඳ ගුරු අභ්‍යාසලාභීත්තේ සංජානනය විමසා බැඳීමට සිදු කරන ලදී. අධ්‍යයන ජනගහනය ලෙස 2018/2020 අධ්‍යයන වර්ෂයේ ගුරු අභ්‍යාසලාභීත්ත තෝරා ගත් අතර නියැදිය සඳහා ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන විද්‍යාපිය පහකින් ගුරු අභ්‍යාසලාභීත්ත 200 (දෙසීයය) ක් අභ්‍යාපිත ලෙස තෝරා ගත්තා ලදී. දත්ත රස් කිරීමට ප්‍රශ්නාවලිය සහ සම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡා නියමාවලිය භාවිත කරන ලදී. ප්‍රමාණාත්මක දත්ත, සංඛ්‍යාත සහ ප්‍රතිගත ඇසුරන් විශ්ලේෂණය කළ අතර ගුණාත්මක දත්ත ගුණාත්මක විශ්ලේෂණ ක්‍රම ඇසුරන් විශ්ලේෂණය කරන ලදී. අඛණ්ඩ ඇගයීම සම්බන්ධයෙන් ගුරු අභ්‍යාසලාභීත්ත තුළ දැනුම, ආකල්ප සහ කුසලතා

පවතින බැවින් අඛණ්ඩ ඇගයීම පිළිබඳ මතා සංජානනයක් පවතින බව අනාවරණය විය. විද්‍යාලිය කළිකාවාරයටුන් එක් එක් ගුරු අභ්‍යාසලාභියා වෙනුවෙන් සුචිගේම් ව අඛණ්ඩ ඇගයීම ක්‍රියාවලිය පිළිබඳ ප්‍රමාණාත්මක සහ ගණනාත්මක පූහුණුවක් ක්‍රමානුකූල ව ලබා දෙන්නේද නියාමනය කළ යුතු වේ. සතියේ දිනවල ප්‍රමාණවත් කාලයක් ප්‍රස්ථකාල විවෘත තොකරන තිසා සති අන්තයේ ප්‍රස්ථකාලය විවෘත ව තැබේමට ක්‍රියාමාර්ග ගත යුතු අතර නව දැනුම අධ්‍යයනය සඳහා ගුරු පූහුණුවට අවශ්‍ය පර්යේෂණ, නව පොත්පත් සහ සගරා වැනි මූලාශ්‍ර සැපයිය යුතු ය.

මූල්‍ය පද: අඛණ්ඩ ඇගයීම, සංජානනය, ගුරු අභ්‍යාසලාභියා, ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන විද්‍යාලිය

Introduction

The National Diploma Teaching course is one of the most popular and highly demanding professional courses conducted by the National Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka for teacher trainees with the aim of developing their professional skills and competencies. Annually about 8000 teacher trainees are recruited to 19 National Colleges of Education, in all three media; namely Sinhala, Tamil, and English by the Ministry of Education. According to the New Education policy reforms continuous assessments play a vital role in the process of evaluation. This shows that considerable attention is given to the implementation of Continuous assessments in the education process. Continuous assessments are used in National Teaching Diploma and paid much attention to the practice of it.

Continuous assessment was introduced to the Sri Lankan education system in 1998 (National Institute of Education, 2017). The introduction of continuous assessment occurred with the revision of school curricula from grade 1 - 11. The goal of this concept is to assess a broad range of educational objectives, including affective objectives which are to be assessed through assessments and group work. Continuous assessments were introduced to National Colleges of Education in parallel with schools. Following are some of the activities introduced for this purpose.

1. Assignments

2. Open book tests

3. Surveys

4. Listening tests
5. Observations
6. Speeches
7. Field trips
8. Group activities
9. Structured essays
10. Double entry journal
11. Creative work
12. Wall papers
13. Practical work
14. Quizzes
15. Compendium of creations
16. Question and answer books
17. Concept maps
18. Debates
19. Projects
20. Panel Discussion
21. Explorations
22. Seminars
23. Exhibitions/Presentations
24. Prompt speeches
25. Short written tests
26. Role-plays

According to the assessment procedure (Evaluation Procedure-2001) which has been in operation since 2007 (National Institute of Education,2007), the number of continuous assessments varies according to the number of hours covered by subjects in the internal period. The maximum number of assessments per subject should be implemented by the respective lecturer who takes up the subject during the period 25 hours of teaching. All continuous assessment marks are very important for teacher trainees to sit the final examination. Accordingly, 60% of the overall Continuous Assessment Mark is considered for the calculation of the final evaluation marks.

The process of assessing teacher trainees' performances continuously and maintaining the progression of learning level is a difficult task. Lecturers have to continuously assess their students to identify whether they have mastered the required skills of the respective course. Smith & Malec (1995) noted that student achievement assessment is subjected to several challenging and emerging socio-economic factors around the world and that these challenges strongly affect the quality of assessment practice. This study wishes to identify the perception of the teacher trainees' in the implementation of the continuous assessment component.

Literature Review

Educational institutions have implemented continuous assessments to evaluate learners. According to Arends (1997), assessment is the full range of information gathered and synthesized by teachers for making decisions about their students. Anderson (2003) also says assessment is the process of gathering information to make informed decisions. According to Earl (1996), an assessment must satisfy many goals such as providing feedback to students, offering diagnostic information for the teacher to use, providing summary information for record-keeping, proffering evidence for reports, and directing efforts in curriculum and instructional adaptations. Therefore assessment can be explained as a process of gathering measurements individually and in groups for the purpose of decision-making .

A tendency of assessment is the recognition of knowledge and skills at the same time. Knowledge and skills should be assessed together rather than assessed separately. Alause (2006) states that teachers should be able to measure the learners effective and psychomotor attributes such as attitudes, motives, interests, values etc. Continuous assessment is the process of paying close attention to students, observing how

students are engaged in learning activities, how they are relevant to the material and to understand what they have understood. Faleyalo (1986) pointed out that a Continuous Assessment of learners' progress could also be explained as a mechanism whereby the final grading of learners in the cognitive; affective and psychomotor domains of learning systematically takes account of all the performances during the given period of learning.

Studies have been found the problems faced by teachers and students in implementing continuous assessments. According to Quansah (2005), the current continuous assessment system includes class tests, exercises, and homework, and the problems with implementing continuous assessment includes lacking of the focus on projects, one of the the most important learning strategies available for students in the active part of their learning. A study by Kapambwe (2010) found that large class size, shortage of funds to fulfil essential resources, teachers' attitude that the continuous assessments take a lot of time with a lack of adequate training teachers are the factors that challenge continuous assessment implementation process. A study conducted by Abera et. al. (2017) also revealed that the most challenging of continuous assessment was plagiarism, lack of feedback, large class size, lack of time and, and facilities. The study conducted by Jayathilake (1997) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Continuous Assessment System of the Post Graduate Diploma in Education program of Open University of Sri Lanka, recommended the needs of the redefining the objectives of using Continuous Assessment as a method of evaluating students' achievements and restructuring the format of assignments. Also, Navaratne and Silva (2013) conducted A Study on The Effectiveness of Continuous Assessment as a Learning Tool. They recommended that it is necessary to educate students on how to use Continuous Assessment effectively as a learning tool, especially at the commencement of the program.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the perception of teacher trainees regarding the continuous assessment that is being implemented in the National Colleges of Education. Its specific objectives were :

1. to find teacher trainees' perception of Continuous Assessment methods used in the National Diploma Teaching course.

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2. to identify the challenges faced by teacher trainees to complete the Continuous Assessment components of the National Diploma Teaching course.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design has been adopted in this study. The population of the study consisted of all teacher trainees of the National Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka. The sample consisted of two hundred (200) teacher trainees randomly selected from five (5) National College of Education in Sri Lanka. A questionnaire was used to collect information from teacher trainees and mainly contained close-ended items. Depending on the types of questions, choices and rating scales were used in the questionnaire. The interview was one of the tools employed in this study to acquire qualitative data. Then the next step was analyzing the collected data qualitatively and quantitatively. The close-ended questions and answers obtained from teacher trainees were analyzed quantitatively and interviews were analyzed qualitatively, finally, the major findings of the study were reported and realistic and feasible recommendations were forwarded.

Results and Discussion

This part presents analyzed and interpreted data and major findings of the study.

Teacher Trainees' Perception of Continuous Assessment Methods

Table 1 shows the responses of teacher trainees to the questionnaire provided to reveal teacher trainees' perceptions regarding continuous assessment.

According to table1, the Majority of teacher trainees (158, 79%) mentioned that continuous assessment encourages them to read books related to the relevant subject. There is a perception of continuous assessment by reading books to explore information related to continuous assessment. 186, 93% acknowledge that continuous assessment motivates them to explore new and updated knowledge. 7% of teacher trainees had not decided that continuous assessment motivates to explore their knowledge. Most of the teacher trainees (140, 70%) responded that continuous assessments enhance their presentation and leadership skills. It was revealed that the Majority of teacher trainees are engaged in continuous assessment and that there was a good understanding of continuous assessment. It was also revealed that teacher

trainees are accepted as a tool for sharing knowledge by everyone (200, 100%) acknowledging that continuous assessment helps to share knowledge with others.

Table 1: Teacher trainees' perception regarding Continuous Assessment methods

Item	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Continuous assessment encourages reading books related to the subject.	158	79	26	13	16	08
Continuous assessment motivates to explore new and updated knowledge.	186	93	14	07	00	00
Continuous assessment Increases our presentation and leadership skills.	140	70	48	24	12	06
Continuous assessment helps to share our knowledge with others.	200	100	00	00	00	00
Continuous assessment helps to do collaborative learning.	135	67.5	65	32.5	00	00
Continuous assessment provides a practical approach to the theory we learned and opportunities to apply theory into practice.	171	85.5	10	05	19	9.5

While the majority of teacher trainees (135, 67.5) acknowledge that continuous assessment helps in collaborative learning and that not a single student disagrees with the above statement, continuous assessment tests revealed that there is an understanding that continuous assessments help to create a collaborative learning environment among teacher trainees. The table below shows that many teacher trainees have recognized that continuous assessments give them a practical approach to the theory they have learned and there are opportunity to put the theory into practice. It is revealed that teacher trainees have a perception that continuous assessment can be used in practical situations when they use theoretical facts which have been learned before, which means the theory comes to practice.

In addition to the questionnaire, an interview was conducted to get the perception of the trainee teachers of the continuous assessments. A summary of the responses given by the teacher trainees is included in Table 2.

Table 2: Responses of teacher trainees on continuous assessment

Responses of teacher trainees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuous assessment extends learning• Continuous assessment means continuous testing• The amount of continuous assessment tests to be done varies according to the time allotted to each subject• Continuous assessment tests should be conducted for each subject.• Tools of continuous assessment include assignments, presentations, short written tests, group activities, projects, Field trips, Wall Papers and observations

The above findings revealed from the questionnaire and interview confirmed that teacher trainees have a positive perception of continuous assessment. The continuous assessment methods used by the lecturers were given for teacher trainees to choose from the list provided and the responses received are given in Table 3.

According to Table 3, all teacher trainees (200, 100%) have selected to carry out continuous assessment methods such as assignments, group activities, field trips, projects, and wallpapers, revealing that these methods are frequently used by lecturers. In addition, more than 50% of respondents said they do creative work (193, 96.5), short written tests (186, 93%), presentations (181, 90.5), structured essays (167, 83.5), role-playing (158, 79%), practical work (149, 74.5%), observations (125, 62.5%), Listening tests (104, 52%) and exploration tests (101, 50.5%). Compendium of creations (98, 49%), concept maps (85, 42.5%), Speeches (72, 36%), panel discussions (70, 35%), Question and answer books (45, 22.5%), debates (19, 9.5%) Were also found to be functional to some extent. However, on responses of teacher trainees Open book tests, Prompt speeches, quizzes, surveys, Double-entry journals, and Seminars do not implement by lecturers and it's revealed that lecturers do not provide teacher trainees with training on all continuous assessment methods.

Table 3: Continuous assessment methods used by Lecturers

Continuous Assessment methods	Agree		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%
Assignments	200	100	00	00
Group activities	200	100	00	00
Field trips	200	100	00	00
Projects	200	100	00	00
Wallpapers	200	100	00	00
Creative work	193	96.5	07	03.5
Short written tests	186	93	14	07
Exhibitions/Presentations	181	90.5	19	09.5
Structured essays	167	83.5	33	16.5
Roleplays	158	79	42	21
Practical work	149	74.5	51	25.5
Observations	125	62.5	75	37.5
Listening tests	104	52	96	48
Explorations	101	50.5	99	49.5
Compendium of creations	98	49	102	51
Concept maps	85	42.5	115	57.5
Speeches	72	36	128	64
Panel Discussion	70	35	130	65
Question and answer books	45	22.5	155	77.5
Debates	19	9.5	181	90.5
Open book tests	00	00	200	100
Prompt speeches	00	00	200	100
Quizzes	00	00	200	100
Surveys	00	00	200	100
Double-entry journal	00	00	200	100
Seminars	00	00	200	100

The challenges faced by teacher trainees when completing the Continuous Assessment Component

Table 4 shows the challenges faced by the teacher trainees in completing the continuous assessment from the questionnaire.

Table 4: Responses of teacher trainees' regarding the challenges in completing the continuous assessment

Item	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Time management is not difficult due to the continuous assessment tests provided for each subject.	18	09	44	22	138	69
Library facilities are sufficient to search for information for continuous assessment tests.	82	41	43	21.5	75	37.5
The time allotted for using the library to search for information for continuous assessment tests is sufficient.	11	5.5	49	24.5	140	70
Permission is granted to use the computer lab to perform continuous assessment tests.	00	00	00	00	200	100
There is free internet access to search information for continuous assessment tests.	00	00	00	00	200	100
National College of Education has the facilities to print and bind written assignments.	20	10	00	00	180	90

Table 4 revealed that the majority of teacher trainees (138, 69%) do not agree with the statement that time management is not difficult due to the continuous assessment tests that must be completed for each subject. The National Diploma in teaching course is a residential vocational training course which runs from 5 am to 6 pm. The above statement may not be consistent with the amount of activity that needs to be done during that time. 41% agrees with the statement that library facilities are sufficient to search for information for continuous assessment while 37.5% disagrees. Also, 21.5% gave a moderate response to the above statement. According to those responses, the teacher trainees may have responded in such a way as they have adequate library facilities in their national college of education. The majority of teacher trainees (140, 70%) responded that the time allocated for using the library to search for information for continuous assessment tests was insufficient. Library facilities are available to some extent, but due to the daily schedule, the time allocated for its use may not be sufficient. The response of the entire sample (200, 100%) to the fact that it does not permit the use of the computer lab for continuous assessment testing reveals that it does not permit the use of computer laboratories for purposes other than teaching and learning and outside of the specific teaching and learning period. Also, the entire

sample (200, 100%) has responded that there is no free internet facility in the national college of education to search for information for continuous assessment tests. It is revealed that free internet facilities are not provided for the use of teacher trainees in the learning and teaching process and this is a problem encountered in completing continuous assessment tests. Assignments and a Compendium of creations given by lecturers should be submitted creatively. The necessary facilities for that should be available at the national college of education. The vast majority of teacher trainees (180, 90%) disagreed with the statement made in this regard, revealing that such facilities do not exist in colleges.

In addition to the questionnaire, information was also collected from the interview. The responses received are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Challenges faced by teacher trainees when Completing the continuous assessment Component

Challenges mentioned by teacher trainees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignments to be completed by studying various sources should be completed and submitted within a short period• Failure to provide clear guidelines on how to complete continuous assessment tests• Lack of adequate books and new publications in the library• Lack of facilities to type, print out, photocopy and bind assignments given• Some lecturers conduct personal evaluations• some lecturers take a long time to give marks to teacher trainees or do not give marks.• Lack of adequate time for continuous activity assessment trials• Not everyone has the opportunity to do some presentations• Some members of the team did not contribute

The responses from the interview sample summarized above confirmed the findings of the questionnaire and also revealed that teacher trainees face other problems.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In general, it can be concluded that the overall implementation of continuous assessment in the National College of Education was successful. Also, it can be concluded that there is a good perception of continuous assessments as they have an understanding that they develop the knowledge, attitude, and skills of the teacher trainees. Moreover, it can be concluded that the lecturers of the National Colleges of Education do not implement all the continuous assessment methods and provide complete training to the teacher trainees in this regard. Furthermore, it can be concluded that teacher trainees face problems due to a lack of adequate facilities in the National Colleges of Education in completing continuous assessment components.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Academic section of National College of Education should systematically regulate whether lecturers implement proper training on continuous assessment methods for teacher trainees in each subject.
2. Other facilities such as library facilities and internet facilities required to complete the continuous assessment examinations should be increased in the National Colleges of Education.
3. Sources such as books, magazines, and researches should be provided to study the information needed to write assignments, and the library should be kept open on weekends as there isn't enough time on weekdays to use it.
4. Lecturers should inform about the marks (grades) obtained by the teacher trainees for each continuous assessment test.

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