TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE

ST.GEORGE EAST EDUCATION DISTRICT IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

MARVA DOWRICH

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Marva Dowrich

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School of Education

Faculty of Humanities and Education

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Abstract

Teacher perceptions of the National Continuous Assessment Programme in a primary school in the St. George East Education District in Trinidad and Tobago.

The study sought to report the views of primary school teachers as implementers of an innovative National Continuous Assessment Programme, a reform initiated by the Ministry of Education. A qualitative case study was employed to explore the following research question. "What specific concerns do teachers have about the implementation of the National Continuous Assessment Programme?'' Seven teachers were chosen through purposive sampling. The semi-structured interview was the instrument used to collect data. Member checking and peer-debriefing were strategies used to help to assure validity.

Major findings revealed that the success of the innovation depended to a large extent on training, leadership, collegial relationships, administrative support, parental involvement and resources. Recommendations for more effective implementation of the Continuous Assessment Programme included .The need for more administrative policies and structures both at the school and district level.

- ✓ Continuous training and staff development

- ✓ The procurement of resources

- ✓ Effective monitoring and evaluation of CAP by school personnel as well as by Ministry Officials

- ✓ Sensitizing and educating parents about the CAP.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background to the problem

Assessment and particularly the assessment of students' learning achievement has become the object of a great deal of attention an activities all over the world, in industrialized countries and developing countries alike (Kellaghan, 2001).

The World Conference on Education for all in Jomtien, Thailand in (March 1999) stated that the focus of basic education should be on "actual learning acquisition and outcome". Additionally, The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) stressed the importance of having a clear definition and accurate assessment of learning outcomes.

A plea for formative assessment in classrooms has become a common denominator in academic publications in all sorts of forums across different countries, and so across different educational cultures (Remesal, 2001).Continuous Assessment was implemented in countries such as Malawi and Honduras .It was noted that there was great improvement in student achievement.(USAID, ,Missions 2003 Vol 1 No.1.)

However, Black and Wiliam (2005) cited in Remesal, 2005 presented a comparative reflection, in which they did an analysis of four national cases- England, France, Germany and the United States. The analysis of the cases revealed the difficulty (if not impossibility of establishing general guidelines for all countries to implement formative assessment Pennycuick (1990) cited in Lubisi & Murphy 2002 argues that the failure of continuous assessment in Sri Lanka was due

to serious lack of capacity among teachers. He also noted that there appear to be similar concerns in the South African Context.

The major changes in the area of assessment of student progress and achievement that have taken place worldwide have also impacted on countries in the Caribbean region as well. The assessment policies and practices of the primary phase of education in Jamaica has responded to these global developments by revising assessment for primary schools in tests and exams .They have shifted their focus from summative instruments to formative and diagnostic tools (Joint Board of Teacher Education , 2003).

Similarly, Barbados has also moved away from relying on a one shot examination and is engaged in a continual incremental system of measuring knowledge, skills and attitudes that students have gained from pursuing the primary school curriculum over a period of time. It has been proposed that the continuous assessment scores should be used in conjunction with the score gained in the Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination to allocate students to secondary schools (Ministry of Education). Other Caribbean islands which have adopted the Continuous Assessment Programme include Belize, Anguilla, the Cayman Islands, Guyanna, Monsteratt, St Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago (Caribbean Exams).

The Educational landscape of Trinidad and Tobago is highly examination oriented .The 1980s and 1990s have seen reforms in education geared towards the improvement of teaching and learning. Notions of the teacher as transmitter of knowledge have given way to the constructivist view of teaching and learning.

Over the years the Common Entrance has been a course of concern for all stakeholders. The Common Entrance examination was considered to be a high risk exam because of the high stakes involved .This examination led to intense stress on the part of some students causing school phobia, demotivation, underachievement and failure. The weaknesses of the low achieving student were compounded as they moved –up through the school system. The Ministry of Education in its response to these concerns embarked on implementing a comprehensive plan, which replaced the much debated and heavily criticized Common Entrance Examination.

A need was established by the National Tasks Force on Education (NTFE), in its Education Policy Paper (1993-2003) for the upgrading of the approach to testing and assessment in the school system. It noted that there was an absence of specified attainment benchmarks(especially in the early years of the primary school) which can guide teaching and learning on one hand and on the other, promote the necessary diagnostic , remedial and preventative interventions critical to the development of an effective and efficient education system. Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago adopted the Continuous Assessment Programme to be implemented in primary schools nationwide.

The Trinidad and Tobago Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP) is a comprehensive system of evaluating and supporting the delivery of the curriculum in schools. It promotes the view that school assessment is an on-going process integral to the goals of teaching, undergirds all good learning and teaching principles and interrelates with curriculum and instruction. It employs a number of strategies and methods for observing, collecting, recording and analyzing and reporting on data about students' attainment, their problems and their progress.

The Continuous Assessment Programme is intended to consider multiple samples of students' performance to ensure that the educational decisions made about students are reliable and implemented from an unrestricted perspective. This approach is informed by a general rule in testing, which states that "no important decision should be made on the basis of one limited sample of behaviour."

The multiple forms of assessment employed in CAP contributed to the educational process in different ways.

1. The provide opportunities for gauging students' performance across the curriculum in all areas of their strengths and weaknesses.

2. They indicate readiness for transition through the different experiences in the school, and from one level of the school system to the next.

Continuous assessment is an approach which focuses on teachers' teaching and students' learning and on the processes which govern the teaching and learning process .The link between curriculum, instruction and assessment is the key position in the operational framework for CAP. The conceptual positions which support CAP are that:

✓   All children can learn and;

✓   High expectation foster high achievement

The Continuous Assessment Programme was implemented in two phases, a pilot phase (September 1998-July 2000) and full implementation is (September 2000). The implementation

of this model will require that new methods, new learning and new trends of thinking replace some traditional and tested ways of operation.

In response to this curriculum reform, the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) has maintained the position that it supports the Continuous Assessment Programme in principle, but does not support its implementation until certain prerequisites are in place. This has led some persons to believe that TTUTA does not want CAP and that the association is resisting the implementation. The prerequisites that must be fulfilled if TTUTA is to fully support the CAP are:

- ➢ Non-Contact time for teachers in the Primary Schools

- ➢ Adequate resources and proper funding

- ➢ Suitable referrals systems and access and specialist

- ➢ Standardization of procedures

School Context

School X is located in the St.George East Education District. The Staff at school X consist of twenty-one teachers, twenty female and one male. Most of the teachers are trained .A few of them have developed themselves professionally and have obtained degrees in education.

In recent years there has been some improvement in our students' academic performance. However, many of our students are still underachieving at the National test and Secondary Entrance Assessment examination. This under achievement by many of our students has triggered great concern among parent and teachers as well. Despite the concerns expressed, the

situation in most of our classrooms has not changed significantly. At School X the majority of our teachers continue to follow a curriculum that reflects a transmission ideology-textbook learning, rote memorization and practical drill. Not only do teachers use traditional methods of teaching but they engage in traditional assessment as well. The physical arrangement in many of the classrooms also reflects a transmission mode. Desks are arranged in rows which do not allow for collaborative learning among students.

Additionally, teachers at school X work mainly in isolation. Efforts were made for them to engage in collegial relationships where they could plan, share their ideas, teaching strategies and best practices, but most of them did not welcome the idea. However at the beginning of each term teachers meet at their levels to plan the scheme of work to ensure that the same topics are covered. They also meet towards the end of the term to plan the end of term tests.

The Continuous Assessment Programme was introduced at school X in March, 2005 .Teachers seemed to be resistant to the change. They appeared to be disgruntled because it seems as if they were not ready for this innovation. Recognizing that it was a reform mandated by the Ministry of Education, they had no choice but to get on board. Hence, the researcher's interest in finding out teachers' perceptions as they implement this programme.

Statement of the Problem

As was indicated in the background the Continuous Assessment Programme was to influence the quality and style of teaching and learning to endure that all children learn by utilizing a range of teaching, learning and assessment strategies. The cultures of different schools have caused teachers to be resistant to the programme in spite of what the Ministry of Education is saying.

The international literature has advocated the benefits of Continuous Assessment. However stakeholders and TTUTA have argued for proper policies and structures to be put in place to effect this change. It is against this background therefore, that the study sought to determine the nature and dynamics of teacher perceptions on the implementation of the National Continuous Assessment Programme in the school under study.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to understand why many stakeholders were against the implementation of the National Continuous Assessment Programme when many countries in the international and regional arena were advocating its use.Moreover, the researcher wanted to find out what in the culture of the school may be contributing to teachers' resistance to CAP. The study is also undertaken to discover what could be done to bring teachers on board to implement this innovation successfully.

Significance of the Study

It was hoped that this study would highlight the experiences (concerns, feelings, perceptions) of the teachers involved in this change process. It would also deepen teachers' understanding of the requirements for successful implementation of CAP. Additionally, it will give meaningful insight into how teachers could be empowered and prepared to conduct the Continuous Assessment Programme. Finally, it will contribute to the local and international body giving insights into the nature and dynamics of Continuous Assessment Programme.

Justification for doing the Study

Continuous assessment is a modern assessment practice observed worldwide. The Literature has revealed that very few people have researched the impact of continuous assessment in schools. In Trinidad and Tobago no such research has been undertaken to determine how teachers feel about the implementation of the innovation. There has been little monitoring of CAP since its inception by Ministry officials. It is expected that it will give administration at School X a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions as they implement the Continuous Assessment Programme.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was inspired by the Concerns Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord 2001).It describes , explains and predicts teacher behaviours throughout the change process.It considers change from the point of those implementing the change.

The conceptual framework argued that:-

- The Continuous Assessment Programme can be successful only if teachers are brought on board and the institutional framework of the education system provide the necessary support

- Teacher empowerment is generated through professional development

- The institutional framework must be provided through policies established by the Ministry of Education through strong structures, adequate resources and administrative support.

Research Questions

One central question and three sub-questions guided the study. The questions are as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of Primary School teachers in the sample of the study on implementing the National Continuous Assessment Programme?

Sub-Questions

a) What are the experiences are of teachers as they implement the National Continuous Assessment Programme at School X?

b) What specific concerns do teachers have about the implementation of the National Continuous Assessment Programme?

c) How have the teachers in the school of the study modified their practices to respond to the demands or requirements of the National Continuous Assessment Programme?

d) What are some of the interventions that teachers believe could facilitate the smooth transition to the implementation of CAP at School X?

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are those conditions beyond the control of the researcher, which may restrict the study in any way. In this study time constraints and preparation of the students for the National Test encroached on the opportunity and sequence for holding the interviews.

Delimitations

In the literature assessment practices there are many approaches. The literature speaks of traditional assessment as well as alternative assessment practices. My concern in this study is to deal with how teachers respond to official mandates for new assessment procedures.This study will be confined to one site, school X, seven participants, one from each grade level and to time, one year September 2007-June 2008.Therefore it will be difficult on a researchers platform to generalize the findings.

Definitions of Terms:

➢ Implementation- The process of putting into practice an idea , programme or set of activities and structures new to people attempting or expected to change.(Fullan, 2001, p.69)

➢ Concern – The composite representation of the feeling, preoccupation, thought and consideration given to a particular issue or task (Hall and Hord, 2001, p.61).

➢ Stages of Concern – A set of seven specific categories of concerns. (Hall and Hord, 2001, p.63).

   1. Awareness :Little concern about or involvement with the innovation is indicated

   2. Informational: A general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more detail about it is indicated .The person seems to be unworried about himself/herself in relation to the innovation. She/he is interested in substantive

aspects of the innovation in a selfless manner, such as general characteristics, effects and requirements for use.

3. Personal: Individual is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his /her inadequacy to meet those demands, and his/her role with the innovation .This includes analysis of his/her role in relation to the reward structure of the organization, decision-making and consideration of potential conflicts with existing structure or personal commitment .Financial or status implication of the program for self and colleagues may also be reflected.

4. Management: Attention is focused on the processes and task of using the innovation and the best use of information and resources. Issues related to efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling, and time demands are utmost.

5. Consequences: Attention focuses on impact of the innovation on clients in his or her immediate sphere of influence. The focus is on relevance of the innovation for clients, evaluation of outcome including performance and competencies, and changes needed to increase client outcomes.

6. Collaboration: The focus is on coordination and cooperation with others regarding use of innovation.

7. Refocusing: The focus is on the exploration of more universal benefits the innovation, including the possibility of major changes or replacement with a more powerful alternative .Individual has definite ideas about alternative to the proposed or existing form of the innovation.

> ➤ Perception – Roth and Bruce (1995) cited in Hargie(1996) describe perception as " how we make sense of all the information we receive from the world via our senses

> ➤ Diffusion-The process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system (Rogers, 1995).

> ➤ Innovation – 'a planned change' and or an idea practice or object perceived as new by individuals or units expected to change (Rogers, 1996)

> ➤ Continuous Assessment is a student evaluation system that operates at the classroom level and is integrated with the instructional process. (Capper, 1996)

Overview of Methodology

This research used the qualitative approach in the tradition of a case study. It is an ethnographic case study. According to Creswell (1998), the researcher examines the groups observable and learned patterns of behavior. Through participant observation the researcher is immersed in the day to day lives of the people or through one to one interviews with members of the group. Qualitative research is also concerned with examining subjective reality Since I am looking at perceptions I thought it would be appropriate.

Purposive Sampling tends to be popular in educational research. Since I am operating in my own school it is convenient to use this approach. Seven participants were purposively selected from each level of the school. Infants one and two, lower juniors- standards one, two and three, upper juniors standards four and five.

Data would be collected using semi-structured interviews with a focus group. Interviews will be taped as well as writing of field notes. The interview protocol will be the instrument used for data collection. Interviews will be transcribed reduced and categorized using codes .Themes would be identified.

Summary of Chapter One

This study was designed to investigate teacher perceptions of the implementation of the National Continuous Assessment Programme. In trying to address the research problem, it was recognized that attention had to be paid to the forces driving the need for Continuous Assessment internationally, regionally and locally .The nature and dynamics of the National Continuous Assessment Programme was discussed .The conceptual framework emphasized that CAP could be successful only if there is teacher empowerment and the institutional framework of the education system provide the necessary support.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The focus of the study was on describing how teacher perception of the National Continuous Assessment could influence its implementation. In pursuing this focus, it was necessary to understand the nature of assessment the pros and cons of standardized tests, recent trends in assessment and the curriculum implementation process.

Nature and dynamics of Assessment

Assessment is broadly defined as a process of collecting information about individuals and groups for the purpose of making decisions(Salvia and Ysseldyke, 1998) cited in (Puckett and Black 2008).They identified the following purposes of assessment:-

➢ Identify, diagnose, and provide essential services to selected child and family population.

➢ Determine individual developmental needs, strengths and aspirations.

➢ Determine individual growth, development and learning progress and academic achievements and challenges.

➢ Communicate with and assist learners in reflecting on their own progress and setting learning and achievement goals.

➢ Communicate individual student progress and needs with parents or guardians.

➢ Analyze curriculum content and teaching strategies and make needed adjustments to assure student success.

Anderson (2003) defines assessment as the process of gathering information to make informed decisions. Before he or she engages in assessment, he or she must know why the assessment is being made (the purpose), what information is needed to make the decision (the basis), when the information is needed (the timing), and how the information is best collected (the method).

Anderson further identified seven standards which were articulated by a joint committee of the American Federation of Teachers, National Council Measurement in Education and National Educational Association(1990).The standards are summarized as follows:-

➢ Teachers should be skilled in choosing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.

➢ Teachers should be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.

➢ Teachers should be skilled in administering scoring and interpreting the results of both externally produced and teachers produced assessment methods.

➢ Teachers should be skilled in using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning, teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvements.

➢ Teachers should be skilled in communicating assessment results to students, parents, other audiences, and other educators.

Earl (2000) stated that "Traditionally, assessment and tests or examinations were synonymous, and their role was clear and consistent with the purposes of schooling-testing of segmented

competencies and knowledge from the school curriculum as a way of sorting students into groups and deciding about future schooling. Assessment was based on the "concordance" or fidelity of the students' responses to the material that was delivered.

Wilson (1996) cited in Earl (2003) submits that assessment must satisfy many goals such as providing feedback to students, offering diagnostic information for the teacher to use, provide summary information for record keeping ,proffering evidence for reports, and directing efforts at curriculum and instructional adaptations.

Nature and dynamics of Standardized Tests

Airasian (2001), defined Standardized assessment procedures "as those that are intended to be administered, scored and interpreted in the same way for all test takers, regardless of where or when they are assessed. Standardized assessments are given to different pupils in different places, but always under identical conditions of administration, scoring and interpretation. The main reason for standardizing assessment procedures is so that pupils' scores can be compared across schools and states without the conditions of administration, scoring and interpretation distorting the comparison. Standardization is only important when one desires to make comparisons among pupils in many different classrooms and locations."

Anderson (2003) reports that there seems to be a great deal of confusion about the term standardization. Some educators would lead you to believe that the term applies only to high – stakes tests. Others would have you believe that it applies only to so-called norm-referenced tests. Still others would have you believe that only commercial testing companies have standardized tests. In point of fact, the term standardized applies to virtually all formal

assessments .Standardization simply means that the same set of assessment tasks is given to all students in the same order under the same assessment conditions.

Gifford (1996) cited in (Perrone 1991) puts forth the view that standardized testing is recognized widely as the instrument, if not the model for measuring student learning across America. Standardized tests exert a powerful hold on classroom experience. The National Centre for Fair and Open Testing estimates that each American child takes as many as three such standardized test every school year(Neill and Medina 1989).These test determine which classes students take, which level of academic potential they are expected to achieve .

Gifford (1996) further argues that standardized tests influence, where they do not dictate, decisions about instructional goals, teacher performance and program funding. Not surprisingly, these measures drive the curriculums in our schools and dominate instruction in the classroom.

In an article written by the centre for Public Education , Popham(1999) states that standardized testing means that a test is administered and scored in a predetermined, manner. Students take the same test in the conditions so results can be attributed to student performance and not to differences in the administration of the test (Wilde, 2004).

Hanna (1993) points out that standardized achievement tests are widely used to measure the school achievement at all educational levels. They provide for formal, separate and standardized measurement that is deliberate, planned separate from other instructional activities, and performed under controlled or standard conditions. They are summative instruments designed to assess broader segments of content.

Advantages of Standardized Assessment

Stiggins (2001) cited in Earl (2003) reported that overtime in the United States in particular, external standardized testing took on a dominant role in this process of identifying and selecting students for favor or censure. Standardized tests offer an image of "scientific credibility" and have the advantage of being mass-produced, administered, and scored. Because of this concrete apparently scientific mechanism for deriving scores that appear to have the same meaning for all students; standardized tests have dominated the landscape for more than 50 years.

Smith (2000) further highlighted that standardized tests have been extolled by politicians as a powerful lever for getting schools to do their jobs. Standardized tests are a fair and objective mechanism for determining how well students, teachers, schools, districts, states and nations are doing in achieving their educational goals. He also submits that standardized tests have certain restrictions that don't exist for classroom testing. For example:-

➢ The assumption of a common curricular among students

➢ A testing format that can be given under standard conditions

➢ A response format that can be graded relatively economically

➢ A fairly limited amount of testing time available.

Bowers (1989), reported that advocates of standard testing assert that it simply achieves more efficiently and fairly many of the purposes for which grading and other traditional assessment procedures were designed .Even critics of Standardized testing acknowledge that it has filled a vacuum. As Grant Wiggins (1989) puts it, mass assessment resulted from legitimate concern

about the failure of schools to set clear, justifiable and consistent standards to which it would hold graduates and teachers accountable.

Disadvantages of Standardized Tests

Persistent and mounting concerns over the increasing use of large-scale testing in schools are compelling (American+ Berliner, 2002; Chase, 2001, Howard, et al. 2003; Kohn, 2000; 2004 Publication Education Network, 2006, Queinler, 2005) It is important to reflect upon the many issues that have been raised with regard to the widespread use of formed testing procedures, particularly with young children .It is appropriate indeed, some believe it is a "moral imperative"(Hastings, 1992) to move away from testing labeling , grouping and tracking systems that sort and classify children , often leaving them with labels they can never shed.

Unfortunately existing standardized test and even large-scale performance assessment are remarkably insensitive to the detection of the things students have learned (Mc Donnell 1994, Popham, 2002).They are designed to spread students out on a continuum, but they do not provide sufficient information to direct the work of schools or tell the people who work in them what to do next.

Stiggins (2001), in a discussion of standardized testing, points out that we have been relentless in our attempts to make standardized test powerful instructional tools that are relevant in the classroom. Unfortunately such tests tend to provide little information of value for day-to-day instruction. They do a good job of assessing broad classifications of content and spreading students out on the basis of the scores (considered against a reference point of other students or

specific preset standards) so that they can be sorted into groups. They do not provide timely or sufficient information to inform classroom practice.

Guskey (1994) also hold the view that people are concerned about the kinds of test preparations that precede standardized testing; especially what is called high stakes standardized testing .The concerns centres on the issues of what is proper preparation and what is just teaching students isolated skills in artificial formats that happen to be on the tests.

Smith (2000) points out that standardized tests have been castigated by their opponents as artificial, biased, time consuming distortions of the educational process. He further argues that standardized tests do not tell us enough about what students actually know and can do, and therefore are limited value in guiding a teacher's daily instruction.

Wildemeth, (1984) also agrees that the use of standardized tests by schools is commonly criticized. The tests do not necessarily test what student have learned .They do not reveal what the students have achieved .Critics have further suggested alternatives to standardized tests be developed and used for more effective student evaluation. Such alternatives have included criterion referenced tests, teacher-made tests, contract grading, interviews with students and parents and detailed documentation of a student's accomplishments.

Perrone (1994) also endorsed this view of the previous writers. He stated that the dominance of standardized testing has rendered schools ill equipped to focus on transformations in students' development. He argues that Norm- referenced, numerical scores do not yield detailed information about how s student has changed relative to her younger self. Isolated test scores tell

us little or nothing about the ripening of processes and understandings students engage in. "Standardized tests displace students from the process and responsibility of assessment."

He further contends that these tests subject students to evaluative measures whose norm-referenced, numerical scores cannot capture the kinds of reflective processes students engage as active learners generating work, tending ideas and developing a way of thinking in a given domain" (pg.54).

As was mentioned earlier Standardized testing is predominantly used in America. However, in Latin America they are cautious about its use. Hackett (2007) in an article entitled "Lessons from Ecuador" reported that "standardized evaluation and assessment are causing great disquiet among teacher unions. Many claimed that such an approach cannot be in the best interest of students, since it does not seem to take into consideration socio-economic status, and cultural differences among students, schools, education districts and countries.

Gift (1997) in an article entitled (First steps for phasing out of Common Entrance Examination) concurred that it was critical that the system breaks out of its present practice of standardized tests so as "to give accountability for student learning a human face" adding that there must be an end to gate keeping, selecting, sorting and even failing students on the basis on pencil and paper test. (Trinidad Guardian p.3)

Recent Trends in classroom Assessment

Earl, 2003 also reported that strong voices have been emerging with alternative visions for assessment in schools- visions that make purpose paramount and shift the focus form large – scale assessments for accountability to classroom assessment for teaching and learning. Since the

mid-1980's ,there has been a steady stream of advocates for assessment being educationally useful(Black, 1998; Sulton , 1995; Wiggins, 1993).They and others have focused on the importance and value of the assessment that teachers do every day in classrooms as a critical element in helping students learn (pg.13).

The revolution in assessment that has occurred in the past ten years has generated a lot of new names for assessment. These include alternative assessment, authentic assessment, performance assessment, portfolio assessment and continuous assessment. Proponents of this new conceptualization of assessment include Stiggins (1991).Johnson 1996 a, 1996 b); Wiggins (1996); Baker and Dunbar (1991); cited in Smith et al (2000).

Zessoldes & Gardener cited in Perrone (1991) argue that in the wake of the concerns about standardized measures, individual teachers, districts and states are developing new kinds of testing measures based on entire performances, currently taking the form chiefly of portfolio and performance based tasks, these measures are often referred to as authentic assessment ,and they are designed to present a broader ,more genuine pictures of student learning .Just as standardized tests have produced a testing culture ,educators interested in reform must recognize and examine the need for a classroom culture that will sustain the values , merits and practices of more authentic forms of assessments.

McMillan (2007) also noted that in the past decade, some clear trends have emerged in classroom assessment. More established traditions of focusing assessment on "objective" testing at the end of instruction are being supplemented with, or in some cases replaced by assessments during instruction .-to help teachers make moment by moment decisions- and with what are called "alternative" assessments. Alternative assessments include authentic assessment,

performance assessment portfolios, exhibitions, demonstrations, journals, and other forms of assessment that require the active construction of meaning rather than passive regurgitation of isolated facts. These assessments engage students in learning and motivation as well as societal needs to prepare students for an increasingly complex workplace.

Another trend is the recognition that knowledge and skills should not be assessed in isolation. Rather, it is necessary to assess the application and the use of knowledge and skills together. More emphasis is now placed on assessing thinking skills and collaborative skills that are needed to work cooperatively with others. New forms of assessments provide opportunities for many "correct" answers, rather than a single right answer, and rely on multiple sources of information.

One of the most important advances in both instruction and assessment is the emphasis on authenticity (Wiggins, 1993, 1998).Authentic instruction and assessment focus on knowledge, thinking and skills exhibited in real-life settings outside school that produce the students best, rather than typical, performance. To accomplish this, students need multiple authentic opportunities to demonstrate the knowledge and skills and continuous feedback. This kind of emphasis results in greater student motivation and improved achievement. In this way authenticity effectively integrates instruction and assessment.

Borich and Tombin (2004) identify the following characteristics of authentic instruction and assessment in the light of what occurs in traditional classrooms. Authentic instruction and assessment emphasize the following:

- ✓ Students are assessed in what was taught and practiced in ways that are consistent with assessment methods.

✓ The focus is on solving problems and accomplishing tasks like those done by professionals in the field.

✓ Standards or criteria for success are publicly shared with the students.

✓ Assessment occurs over time to provide meaningful feedback so students can improve,

✓ Learning and assessment are similar to "real life".

Another important trend is to involve students in all aspects of assessment, from designing tasks and questions to evaluating their own and others' work.

Engaging students in developing assessment exercises, creating scoring criteria, applying criteria to student products and self assessment all help students understand how their own performance is evaluated. This understanding facilitates student motivation and achievement. Thus; there is a change of emphasis from the teacher providing all assessment tasks and feedback to promoting student engagement in the assessment process. This is the best accomplished when there is a "continuous flow of information about student achievement … to advance not merely check on , student learning "(Stiggins, 2002, p.761) that is, assessment for learning becomes as important as assessment of learning (cited in McMillan 2007).

Student engagement in assessment is closely related to another recent trend: a greater emphasis on what is termed "formative" assessment .Formative assessment is what teachers do when they obtain information about student understanding during instruction and provide feedback that includes correctives to help students learn. It involves both formal and informal methods of gathering information with the sole purpose of improving student motivation and learning .In contrast, summative assessment documents what students have learned at the end of an

instructional unit. Effective teaching requires the use of both formative and summative assessment. The greater emphasis in recent years, which integrates nicely with recent theories of motivation and cognition suggests a continuing focus on improving student learning with assessments that are integrated with instruction.

A key element in this process is continuous monitoring by teachers to ascertain their students' reactions to instruction and students' progress toward understanding the content or accomplishing the skill. Carlson, Humphrey, and Reinhardt (2003) describe the process as continuous assessment.

Moves towards Continuous Assessment

Pennycuick cited in Broadfoot (1990) reported that there is a significant international trend towards continuous assessment (CA).Many developing countries, with a variety of political ideologies, have introduced CA to operate in parallel with external examinations at secondary level.CA results may be reported separately, or CA may form a component of students' final results; few countries have moved as far as the Australian state of Queensland in replacing external examinations by CA. But in some developing countries (e.g. Tanzania, Papua ,New Guinea) CA systems have been in operation for over a decade .Others(e.g. Sri Lanka ,Swaziland) are in the process of introducing CA.

In Sri Lanka, the introduction of continuous assessment coincides with the revision of school curricula for 1-11.The main reason for the introduction of a CA component is to enable a wider range of educational objectives to be assessed, including affective objectives to be assessed through assessments and group work.

The intention is for CA to be utilized in improving teaching –learning in schools. According to the Sri Lankan Department of Examinations, CA will stress the following features (adapted from Sri Lanka, 1987).

➢ Closeness to the pupil and to the learning event.

➢ Openness ,with expected learning outcomes, the scheme of assessment

➢ The marking scheme and the marks made to pupils and parents.

➢ Wider participation by teachers, parents and pupils.

➢ Integration of assessment with teaching –learning with feedback to improve the lather

➢ Wider scope for the realization of educational objectives.

➢ Effective feedback and meaningful remedial action

➢ Scope for mastery learning

➢ The Continuous element

➢ CA is directed towards reaching achievement targets.

The introduction of CA in Tanzania can be traced back to the Musoma resolution of 1974, which stated the necessity of getting rid of the 'ambush' target of examinations and reducing the excessive emphasis placed on written examinations (TANU 1974) quoted in Njabili 1987).

Njabili argues that the main purpose of having a continuous assessment scheme as an integral component of assessment procedures in the Tanzanian education system is to eliminate

/minimize the element of risk associated with single examinations and to give a valid indication of student achievement, because it is felt that no student who works conscientiously should fail.

Another country with a long-standing commitment to CA is Papua, New Guinea, which has used two systems since Independence in 1975.The Papua New Guinea Department of Education issues detailed instructions to schools for the conduct of Continuous Assessment and schools have also been supplied with resource material from which they can generate their own classroom tests.

The Seychelles is a small developing country which has introduced CA in the National Youth Service (NYS) as part of a move away from the selective function of education .Continuous Assessment should consider the student's achievement in both cognitive and psychomotor domains .And in addition to that the teacher should make comments about the way the student is behaving during the learning time. (Seychelles 1987)

In Nigeria, the 1977 National Policy on Education laid strong emphasis on CA .This advocacy of Continuous Assessment arose for the belief that it would:

- ✓ Give the teacher greater involvement in the overall assessment of his or her pupils,

- ✓ Provide a more valid assessment of the child's overall ability and performance

- ✓ Enable teachers to be more flexible and innovative in their instruction

- ✓ Provide a basis for more effective guidance of the child

- ✓ Provide a basis for the teacher to improve his or her instructional methods

- ✓ Reduce examination malpractices

Aims of Continuous Assessment

- ➢ To enhance validity of assessment

  It is argued that one-off, formal examinations are not a good test of pupil achievement. For example (Coursework) allows candidates who do not perform well under examination conditions to demonstrate their true ability in a more relaxed atmosphere.

  Coursework can also be used to assess those skills that cannot be measured or assessed in a written examination (M Kandaweire 1984).

  Although in some cases continuous assessment may consist merely of a series of written test, it is the general aim of CA to assess and report a wider range of student achievement. Thus CA may include a wide variety of styles, e.g. projects, essays, oral test, practical tests, portfolios, assignments, interviews questionnaires and teacher observation.CA is also intended to cover a much wider range of skills than traditional written examinations. These skills may span cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, and in the case of the cognitive domain emphasize higher –order skills, e.g. of application and analysis.

  It is felt that the validity of student results is increased by gathering assessment over a substantial period of time and by maximizing the range of educational objectives which are assessed.

- ➢ To integrate curriculum , pedagogy and assessment

The introduction of CA may also be related to concern about the quality of educational provision. A key feature in all the countries considered is the responsibility of teachers for continuous assessment of their own pupils and their involvement in both the planning and implementation of CA .The introduction of CA provides considerable opportunities for in service education and training. Another key feature of CA system is feedback of assessment data about individual students and about curricular effectiveness.

➢ To serve a broader range of assessment functions and in particular to emphasis formative functions.

The current shift of emphasis away from summative functions appears to be of great importance, at any rate within the world of education itself. Frith and Macintosh (1984) classify assessment functions under six headings: diagnosis, evaluation, guidance, prediction, selection and grading.

To classify the formative / summative distinction, formative functions are largely internal to the school while summative functions have more external significance. The formative functions fit more closely with the concept of assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process rather than as something 'bolted on' ;they may be seen as more 'educational' than the summative functions, many of which are more 'political' in nature.

Black & Wiliam (1998) cited in Hall, 2000 stated that a critical review no less than 578 studies revealed problems of Continuous Assessment. Continuous assessment is not

without its problems, and countries considering the introduction of CA would be well advised to weigh the pros and cons.

➢ There is little published evaluation of CA scheme in developing countries Nwakoby (1987) studied the operation of CA in a Nigerian State .She highlighted major problem areas as being:

1. Inadequate conceptualization

2. Doubtful validity

3. Inadequate structural and administrative support

Nwakoby's research points to the need for clarity and for an adequate infrastructure.

Specific problems which may affect the implementation of CA schemes include:

i. Teachers may lack experience of and expertise in CA .In particular the quality of many classroom tests may be low, intending to negate gains in validity of assessment made possible by the introduction of CA.

ii. Teacher work load may be substantially increased by CA.There is evidence from England (Pennycuick and Murphy 1998) that teachers are prepared to make the necessary effort if they perceive the benefits to themselves and to their pupils of an innovations assessment system.

iii. If CA includes project work there may be overload on pupils undertaking projects in several subjects simultaneously; Also pupils from relatively wealthy

backgrounds may be at an advantage in that they have greater access to resources needed for such work.

iv.   Administration of CA within the school may not be straight forward. Consideration needs to be made of what to do when pupils are absent for CA tests, or when a pupil transfers from one school to another , as well as how to deal with normal aggregation and weighting if marks.

v.   There are several possible sources of unreliability in school-based assessment .They include administrative mistakes, teacher or assessor bias, conscious or unconscious and doubtful originality of the work. It requires constant vigilance to minimize these factors, but it should be remembered that there may also be unreliability in external examinations.

(Kellaghan & Greany 1992) reported that the study by WAEC, Accra, Ghana questioned the reliability of the Continuous assessment scores and indicated that generally the Continuous Assessment scores were abused by some teachers.

Black and Wiliam 1998 cited in Hall (2000) point out that formative assessment does improve learning. However, among the key findings are that these kinds of assessment is not well understood by teachers and is weak in practice, and that its implementation calls for deep changes both in teacher perceptions of their role in relation to their pupils and their classroom practice. They further stated that many other recent studies on the practice of assessment clearly demonstrate that there can be no effective change at the level of the classroom without schools and teachers being provided with the necessary training and resources. It seems clear that the

introduction of continuous assessment is likely to be most successful in countries with high levels of infrastructure, authority and consensus, and where there is adequate planning, adequate resources and adequate in service, educational training to support the innovation.

Continuous Assessment is a curriculum reform in Trinidad and Tobago. As with all other educational reforms criticism has been leveled at this innovation from teachers and other stakeholders across this educational landscape. Teachers seem to be resistant to this change. Teachers and implementers of change must remember that change always implies criticism of some and rocks the comfort zone of others.

According to the research literature, teachers form part of the most essential aspects of curriculum change since they are the ones who are expected to implement the change. Teachers' roles, perceptions and concerns are of paramount importance when addressing curriculum change.

The literature has identified certain underlying principles involving implementation. Throughout the literature there has been evidence to support that change is a highly complex, multivariate and dynamic at all levels-the individual, organization and system.

Three models have identified in the literature as the conceptual framework which underpins the curriculum implementation process:

- ✓ Fullan's Educational Change Model
- ✓ The Concerns Based Adoption Model by Hall & Hord
- ✓ Rogers' Diffusion Model

Fullan, (2001) posits that the implementation of educational change involves change in practice. He identified three components at stake in implementing any new programme or policy:

- ➢ The possible use of new or revised materials

> ➢ The possible use of new teaching approaches

> ➢ The possible alteration of beliefs

All three aspects of change are necessary because together they represent the means of achieving a particular educational goal or set of goals.

According to the assumptions of Rogers, (2000) model a curriculum innovation must be perceived by teachers as having relative advantage, compatibility, less complexity, trialibility and observability. This influences the implementation process and accelerates the rate of adoption.

The Concerns Bases Adoption Model provided by Hall & Hord (2001) has identified certain assumptions about educational change.

Principles of Change

The first assumption of the CBAM Model is change is a process. (Hall, Wallace, and Dossett, 1973) argue that change is a process not an event .They further contend that change is not accomplished by having a onetime announcement by an executive leader, a two day training workshop for teachers in August or the delivery of the new curriculum technology to the school. Instead change is a process through which people and organizations move as they gradually come to understand, and become skilled and competent in the new ways. Other researchers have also documented that most changes in education take three to five years to be implemented. (Hall and Loucks, 1977; Hall and Rutherford, 1976).Failure to address key aspects of the change process can either add years to, or event prevent, successful implementation.

The Second assumption of the Model is that successful change starts and ends at the individual

level. An entire organization does not change until each member has changed. The CBAM model acknowledges the roles of individuals as critical to the implementation process.

The third assumption of the model is that the school is the key organizational unit for making change successful. The School's staff and leader will make or break any change effort, regardless of whether the change is initiated from inside or outside. The school can and must do a lot by itself but it also needs to move in concert with and be supported by the other components of the system. Change process are easier and chances of sustained success are increased as the staff understands more about how to use external resources and as those external to the school recognize the importance of their roles in facilitating each school in achieving change success.

The fourth assumption is that change is a highly personal experience. As teachers are engaged in change, many feelings and perceptions are expressed, and many more are only whispered or left unspoken. No matter how promising and wonderful the innovation, no matter how strong the support, teachers will still have moments of self doubt about whether they can succeed with this new ways and whether they even want to change .Change is brought about by people so their feelings, concerns, perceptions, frustrations all play a critical role in determining the success or failure of an innovation.

The fifth assumption is change entails growth in feelings and skills. Feelings and perceptions about the innovation and the change process can be sorted and classified into what is called concerns .The conceptual underpinnings for stages of concern were founded by Fullers' research on the evolution of pre-service teachers to experienced teachers (Hall & Hord, 2001).

Stages of Concern of the CBAM model is a diagnostic tool used to identify the concerns of teachers during the process of implementation. The SOC gives insight into teachers' feelings and perceptions about the change during implementation and can be "experienced", observed and documented. (Hall & Hord, 2001, p.77). This diagnostic tool, coupled with that of the level of use which aligns teachers' behaviours with new practices are used to match resources with teachers' needs. That teachers experience these feelings during the change process is one of the fundamental principles underlying the stages of concern of the CBAM model .The stages range from awareness concerns, tasks concerns, impact concerns, collaboration, and consequence and refocusing concerns. (Hall & Hord, 2000).A description of stages of concern is given in (Appendix A).

Assessment of teachers' concerns and the level of use of an innovation will determine the necessary interventions that can be made by the change facilitator to support the change process. Vandenberg 1987, Persichitte and Bauer, 1996; Shiek, (1999) cited in Hall & Hord (2001) contend that interventions to facilitate change need to be aligned with the concerns of those who are engaged with the change.

Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) further endorse that all change originated with individuals: individuals change, and through their change behaviours, individuals change. Change occurs when individuals' concerns are made known .All change is personal and for individuals to "buy into change" they must have ownership of both the concern and the processes of the change.

Teacher Experiences on Implementing Assessment

In Black and Wiliam, (1998) study on formative assessment, among the key findings are that this type of assessment is not well understood by teachers and is weak in practice. Its implementation calls for deep changes both in teacher perceptions of their own role in relation to their pupils and their classroom practice (cited in Hall, p.25).

Broadfoot and Abbot (1991) also observed that teachers are facing unprecedented challenges both to understand and apply assessment techniques at all stages of the educational system. These scholars further noted that by far the most common perceived pressure, predictably, was that of time. For one respondent, assessment that used to take place at the end of the term or year has been replaced by regular assessment of different things for different groups all through the year.

Kirk and Mc Donald (2002) reported that one teacher voiced a wide spread concern when she asked: "and how can you record observation of 28 children after every lesson? It's just generalist teachers in primary schools expressed a similar view". This statement provides a flavor of the complex environment in which teachers were attempting to introduce new assessment practices.

Remesal (2007) argued that is necessary to explore teacher conceptions of assessment within and across each particular system, if we want to propound strategies of change that are likely to be understood, accepted and assumed by the teachers.

Summary of Literature

The research and literature revealed that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It helps in teacher decision making and instruction. Mention was made of the nature of assessment, the pros and cons of the literature. However, consensus in the literature showed a paradigm shift from standardized testing to alternative forms of assessment. As a result a significant international trend towards continuous assessment was observed among many developing countries. However, it was noted that continuous assessment is not without its challenges; therefore countries considering the introduction of CA must be cautious in their approach in implementing it. The literature also confirmed that the perceptions of teachers can impact on the implementation process. It was also recognized that attempts to implement innovations, must take into account the personal side of the change process. The concerns, needs and perceptions of those required to implement the change must be understood by the individuals who are the change.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of how the research design in the study organized the

sampling procedure, data collection and analysis to answer research questions.

Research Design:

Justification for using qualitative research:

This research uses the qualitative approach in the tradition of a case study for its investigation

into teacher perceptions on the implementation of the national continuous assessment

programme at School X.

The qualitative paradigm was applied in keeping with the thinking if Creswell (1998), Merriam

(1992), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Mc Millian and Schumacher (2001).

Creswell (1998) describes qualitative research as a process of understanding based on distinct

methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher

builds a complex, holistic picture analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and

conducts the study in natural setting.

Mc Millian and Schumacher (2001) using different assumptions reported to some extent similar

views. They submit that qualitative research is based on a constructivist philosophy that assumes

reality as a multilayer, interactive and a shared social experience interpreted by individuals.

Qualitative researchers believe that reality is a social construction that is individuals or groups

derive or ascribe meanings to specific entities such as events, persons, processes or objects. In other words people's perceptions are what they consider "real" to them and what directs their actions, thoughts and feelings.

Merriam (1998) also believes that a key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Therefore this paradigm allows the researcher to understand the meaning people have constructed that is how they make sense of their world and the experience they have in the world.

Miles and Huberman (1994) also hold the view that in qualitative research the researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors "from the inside" through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding and of suspending or bracketing preconceptions about the topics under discussion.

The present study sought to understand the perceptions of teachers on the implementation of the national continuous assessment programme. Thus, the perspectives of the participants experiences is of utmost importance as the researcher seeks to understand and describe the participants' experiences and how these experiences are seen by the participants themselves.

For these reasons therefore, application of the qualitative paradigm was considered critical to the study.

Justification for using qualitative case study approach:

The primary method for this research is a case study .Case Studies are in-depth detailed exploration of single, examples (an event process, organization, group or individual) that are "an

instance drawn from a class" of similar phenomena (Adelman, Jerkins and Kemmis; 1983, p.3) in Rossman & Rallis 2003.They seek to understand the larger phenomenon through close examination of a specific case and therefore focus on the particular .Case studies are descriptive, holistic, heuristic and inductive.

Case studies are complex and multilayered. They are particularly useful for their rich description and heuristic value. Most case studies are descriptive or explanatory, that is, they depict events, processes, and perspectives as they unfold-the "real-life context" (Yin, 1994, p.25) cited in Rossman & Rallis, 2003.

Miles and Huberman (1994) think of the case as a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context .As such this case study is bounded in that it focuses on the national continuous assessment programme implemented by the Ministry of Education by teachers at school X, situated in the St.George East Education District.

Also the case study approach was chosen because a bounded system (Creswell, 1998) consistently of teachers belonging to the same school during a fixed time period was investigated. Having become aware of teachers and the necessary interventions which would help to alleviate them, it is my hope that this case study will be used as the vehicle through which plans can be made for the improvement of the implementation of continuous assessment programme as envisioned by the policy makers and planners of this innovation.

Sampling and Selection of Participants

Participants of the study were purposively chosen .Purposive Sampling – a strategy top choose small groups or individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001) was used in selecting teachers for the interviews. I invited teachers from each level of the school –Infant, Junior and Upper Juniors to participate in the study. A total of seven teachers – six female and one male were chosen. There teaching experience range from thirteen years to thirty-eight years. Three of these teachers have Bachelor of Arts Degrees in Education along with the Teachers' Diploma. The other four participants only have the Teacher's Diploma.

Table 1

<u>The Distribution Table of Teachers' Genger,Ages, Teaching Experience & Professional Qualifications.</u>

Teacher	Gender	Teaching Experience	Professional Qualification
1	Male	22 years	1. Teachers' Diploma 2. Certificate in Education 3. Bachelors in Education 4. Masters of Science
2	Female	21 years	1. Teachers' Diploma
3	Female	38 years	1. Teachers' Diploma
4	Female	32 years	1. Teachers' Diploma
5	Female	32 years	1. Teachers' Diploma 2. Bachelors in Education
6	Female	15 years	1. Teachers' Diploma
7	Female	13 years	1. Teachers' Diploma 2. Bachelor of Science 3. Elementary Education

Procedure used in Instrument Administration

Research is not necessarily conducted in isolation. In order to conduct this research permission was sought from the principal and teachers of the school (see appendix C&D for letters from the university, school and the teachers) .As already explained seven teachers were interviewed. The original plan was to interview the principal of the school. This, however, never materialized.

The procedure planned and enacted was as follows:

The researcher would remind the teachers as to the time and venue of the venue. In many instances light talk would preceed the interview as the researcher had to wait till teachers were able to leave their classes. Each focus group interview has duration of one hour. An interview protocol (see appendix A), characterized by open ended questions was used. Each question was put to the group members, who, took turns without interference from the researcher aired his or her views on the issue.

All interviews were recorded and the notes taken by the researcher as well. Teachers were totally comfortable with such a procedure. At the end of the first and second interviews the researcher and group members scheduled the time they would meet for the next session. Following this the researcher thanked the teachers for the time, ideas and the goodwill before parting.

Strategies to ensure trustworthiness

Creswell (2003) states that validity is seen as strength of qualitative research. It is used to suggest determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of the account (Creswell and Miller 2000).Terms abound in the

qualitative literature that speaks to this idea, include "trustworthiness", "authenticity" and credibility. Eight strategies were identified in the literature to enhance validity.

The strategies used by the researcher were member checking and peerdebriefing.Accuracy of the data collected was checked by teachers after it was transcribed to determine whether words spoken matched intended meanings. Also, one of my colleagues was chosen to review, critique and ask questions about the study.

Data Collection

The semi-structured open-ended interview was the mode of data collection. According to Patton in Merriam (1998). "We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe….feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meaning they attached to what goes on in the world." (pg.72)

Bateson (1990) in Merriam notes that the use of interviews is the best technique to use when conducting intensive care studies of a few selected individuals. This method was chosen for finding out what were the concerns of teachers with regard to the continuous assessment programme.

Patton (1980) submits that interview data for programme evaluation purposes allow the evaluator to capture the perspectives of programme participants associated with the programme. He formulates certain questions to obtain these perspectives.

- ❖ What does the program look like and feel like to the people involved?
- ❖ What are the experiences of program participants?

- ❖ What thoughts do people knowledgeable about the program have concerning programme operations processes and outcomes?

- ❖ What features of the program are most salient to the people involved?

- ❖ What changes do participants perceive in themselves as a result of their involvement in the program? (pp.196-197)

Interviewing teachers would give a better understanding of their perspectives on continuous assessment – their feelings, their beliefs, their views and concerns about this curriculum innovation.

The Concerns Based Adoption Questionnaire was the instrument used to guide the researcher in the formulation of the question used during the interviews. These interviews took the form of a focus group. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) focus group interview is a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concern, new product, programme or idea by interviewing a purposefully sampled group rather than each person individually. By creating a social environment in which group members are stimulated by the perceptions and ideas of each other one can increase the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than one-on one interviewing. Participants were informed that their perspectives in the research were of paramount importance and that they can express their honest views.

Since the topic and questions were outlined in advance, it made the data collection more systematic. The interviews also remained fairly conversational allowing for flexibility and the probing of responses. Assimilating the information coming from the respondents and at the same

time thinking of ways to probe deeper was initially quite challenging to me. I realized that listening and maintaining eye contact were critical to the interviewing process.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) in Merriam (1998) posit the good qualitative researcher "looks and listens everywhere". It is only by listening "to many individuals and to many points of view that value –resonant social contexts can be fully equitably and honorably represented."(pg.23)

In listening to participants perspectives gave the researcher deeper understandings as they shared their concerns. Participants openly expressed their feelings without fear to someone who gave them the opportunity to have their views heard.

The interview protocol (See Appendix) was organized form the research questions. Questions were categorized according to the different stages of concern of the CBAM model, namely self concerns, tasks concerns, impact concerns and refocusing concerns. Interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes and took place at school in the library .All interviews were audio – taped and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1984) have provided a three stage process for qualitative data analysis – data analysis reduction, data display, conclusion and verification. Data reduction according to them, dealt with selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming raw data from fieldnotes.Data display as they saw it was in the context of the organization of field data for making conclusions .Finally in the last stage, opportunities for comparisons and determining differences were explored.

The transcripts on the recorded interviews were scanned for units of analysis. Segments of data were underlined and marginal remarks were assigned. The coding process involved noticing relevant phenomena and analyzing the phenomena in order to find commonalities and differences. The technique of comparing and contrasting was used thereby identifying data segments. The key terms and phrases were reduced to create clusters. This was done several times as different clustering patterns were tried.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) defined data analysis as an ongoing cyclical process integrated into all phases of qualitative research. As the first step in the analysis, I listened to and made notes on the interview data. The transcript of interviews were coded, categorized and ordered to decipher emerging themes and patterns.

  Analysis consisted of moving data from category to category looking for commonalities and differences within the categories. The data were arranged and rearranged until some measure of coherence became evident. At this stage, all the categories were brought together to identify links that existed between them. As the categories became clearer, themes and patterns emerged from the data and these were merged together. Themes were classified under the Stages of Concern of the Concerns Based Adoption Model which was the conceptual framework used for the second research question.

Ethical Considerations

The case study tradition involved gaining access to the case from the gate keeper who provides entrance to the research site. Gaining access through the gate keeper and establishing rapport with the case being studied are important for a case study (Creswell, 1998).The researcher

explained the nature of the research to the principal of School X and sought permission to

conduct the study at the school (See Appendix).Letters were given to the participants informing

them of the nature and purpose of the research. The researcher assured the participants of

anonymity and confidentiality of responses. Also, they had the option of withdraw at any point in

the data collection process if they so desired.

Summary of Methodology

The study was a qualitative case study which involved purposive sampling procedures. Focus

groups interviews were used for data collection .The interview protocol was the instrument used

to collect data. It consisted of 25 questions, which set the atmosphere for an open-ended

discussion. Qualitative data analysis techniques in keeping with the qualitative design for the

study was applied .Finally member checking and peer debriefing were used. These help to

establish the validity of the findings.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings and Interpretations

<u>Introduction</u>

The findings for the second Research question, "What specific concerns about the implementation of the National Continuous Assessment Programme do teachers in the study have?" were categorized according to the stages of concerns of the Concerns Based Adoption Model. These are self concerns, task concerns, impact concerns and refocusing concerns. Seven teachers, Roy, Jane, Betty, Pam, Sita, Carol and Gail (pseudonyms) all had concerns about the implementation of CAP at school X.

In keeping with University regulations (only one research question), research question two (2) was operationalized in chapters four and five. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the other three sub-question as well as the central question.

Sub-questions

a. What are the experiences of teachers as they implement the National Continuous Assessment Programme?

b. How have the teachers in the school of the study modified their practice to respond to the demands or requirements of the National Continuous Assessment Programme?

c. What are some of the interventions that teachers believe could facilitate the smooth transition to the implementation of CAP

Central Question

What are the perceptions of Primary school teachers in the sample of the study on implementing the National Continuous Assessment Programme?

Self Concerns

These are concerns which teachers have in relation to the innovation. It includes personal concerns and informational concerns which deal with teachers' awareness of the innovation and how they perceive their ability to implement it.

The findings revealed that most of the teachers had a basic knowledge of the Continuous Assessment programme .However it is the common view of all the participants in the study that they needed more information and clarification in some areas of the CAP.

Betty, a second year teacher justified her opinion as she explained.

> You would always need information .But the way we had
> to manage it, we had to learn the hard way, trial and error.
> I remembered the first time I did it, it was horrible and even
> when you went to other teachers they did not know what to do.
> It was as if the blind leading the blind.

Other teachers shared the sentiments of Betty. Carol, a standard three teacher stated that she needed more information on projects and portfolios, whilst, Jane, a standard one teachers indicated that she needed help in the area of assessing the aesthetics.

However, Gail, a standard four teacher differed in her response .She declared:

Feel comfortable, I have come to realize that most of what they
are asking you to do with the CAP book is what we have been
doing all along .You have been looking at the children's
participation/behaviour but now you have the demands placed
upon you to document it. Those are the things you have been doing
all the time. Doing the test with children looking for their weaknesses
and how they can improve. It requires a little adjustment in terms of
recording.

Task Concerns

These concerns are related to the actual use of the CAP in the classroom. For the teachers, the
task concerns were feelings of uncertainty, the time needed for the project, and other aspects of
assessment, accessibility of resources, lack of training and lack of administrative support and
parental support.

Inherent in the voices of teachers was the fact that the project is very time-consuming .This was
clearly articulated by Roy, a standard five teacher .He said:

I have an exam class. With the demands of the project it has been
very difficult to do a comprehensive project along with the demands
of the Ministry of Education and school administration. I have to
teach the syllabus. It has been challenging in terms of the project
and other aspects of CAP.I have to cover certain objectives .
At the end of the day, the children have to be prepared for the exam.
I was a bit lackadaisical in terms of CAP because of the demands of
the exam.

Jane, a standard one teacher echoed the sentiments of Roy. She stated:

> I think it is a lot of work and for it to be really successful we
>
> need a qualified helper. We have to mark the weekly tests and
>
> you have to have the children otherwise engaged. Somebody
>
> should be there to carry on with your class. Qualified help needed
>
> -a teacher's aid.

Betty a second year teacher was of a similar view that there was a need for a qualified help. She remarked:

> I think it is something. They mean well .I think it is something
>
> that has been copied from North America, but, like everything
>
> else when we start something in Trinidad we don't have things
>
> in place. We always copy something from somewhere else and
>
> we don't have anything to back it up. And that is going to be the
>
> downfall of CAP. That is my grouse about the whole thing. They
>
> don't have support systems in place.

Another tasks concern expressed by most of the teachers was the need to be equipped with

necessary skills to implement the Continuous Assessment Programme at School X.

Pam, a standard two teachers declared:

> "Teacher orientation to the CAP was poor."

Jane, a standard one teacher said:

> "I got a CAP book but I put that aside."

Roy explained:

> "Even at our level there were a couple of teachers who came to
>
> me because they were not sure how to do it".

Sita sharing the sentiments of her colleagues said:

> "Browsing the CAP manual through is one thing, but practicing it is
>
> something else .I always promising to go by somebody but there is never
>
> time to do that.

Betty, contended that:

> "What I found was even though we all had a CAP manual
>
> everybody was interpreting what was in the book differently
>
> that made it harder eventually .We gain the skills by trial and
>
> error .Training should have come first."

Gail also shared the concerns of the other teachers. She added yet another dimension to the way

CAP was implemented   to School X and this is expressed in her words.

She declared:

> "I think that the formation of a portfolio, a profile on each
>
> student is a part of CAP.I am not certain , but I have not
>
> been doing that. She further reiterated that all trained
>
> teachers should have those skills. However, occasionally
>
> some workshop training may be necessary to sharpen them."

One of the many task concerns that all the teachers has was the lack of resources to help with the implementation of CAP. The availability as well as the accessibility of resources were the unanimous belief of all the teachers and clearly articulated by Gail who said:

> "Human resource is needed to assist with the clinical aspects
> of recording and tabulating .Additionally if student profiles
> are necessary then secure storage for files are needed".

Carol, a standard three teacher lamented:

> The internet and multi-media must be made available
> to teachers. The computer room should not be closed
> to teachers .Teachers need to be trained in using the
> technology e.g. the multi-media as a teaching tool. We live
> in the information age. In 2008, we should get away
> from the concept of writing on the blackboard.

Pam, a standard two teacher, also shared Carol's concern. She added:

> "It is not that we don't know how to use technology.
> It is not accessible."

The issue of time was another concern of all the teachers was they described the way CAP was implemented in the school.

Roy declared:

"We don't have time to analyze the data properly.

Gail said:

"Relief time is needed for thorough preparation, timely

correction of tests so that evaluation can be made in a

timely manner to remediate."

It was unanimously agreed by all teachers that there is a need for administration to revisit the

time-table so that they can implement the CAP more effectively.

The concern of lack of parental support was verbalized by some teachers.

Sita, a first year teacher explained:

"I'm not sure parents were informed about the CAP,

because in first year when you tell parents about

projects they hesitate. Some parents refuse to send

pictures to complete projects. They don't see the

importance of it."

Betty, a second year teacher shared this view .She said:

I think that parents were not educated about the CAP.

Just as how they send out a letter informing them about

their rights and non-rights they should have been given

a letter from the Ministry telling them what is expected.

What Cap is all about? When you ask the children to bring

things they don't really bring them. That has been our

experience .The Ministry should initially send out letters.

Gail, a standard five teacher in response to her fellow colleagues added:

"Among us we are hearing that parents are not cooperating

or knowing what is happening with CAP.I think that

administration through the Parent Teacher Association

or through the special parent meetings can inform the

parent about their role with their children at home ,

preparing with projects, what CAP is about and why it is

important for them to be at school for the weekly tests and

things like that so that we can get support from them. If

administration could work in that area that should help a

great deal."

With reference to the comments made about parental support , Roy added yet another slant to his colleagues .He said:

"I am a parent too .I remember my daughter came home

with a project and I had to do the whole project at home.

Projects should be done at school. Administrators must inform

Teachers that projects is supposed to be done at school."

Impact /Consequence

Impact concerns are further classified into consequence, collaboration and refocusing according to CBAM.

Consequence

These concerns deal with the impact the Continuous Assessment Programme had on the pupils and focuses on its relevance and changes needed to increase students' performance. (Hall & Hord, 2001).

Only two teachers had concerns about the weekly test. Gail a standard five teacher complained:

"I noticed that one child in particular cried today. Last week

Her mark was low. She went home and revised and for

whatever reason , and still it wasn't as she had anticipated.

Actually, today I have five students absent. I think that was

because the test was carded for today, some of them stayed

at home."

Carol, a standard three teacher also had a concern with the poor attendance of pupils on the day which was scheduled for the tests. (Friday) She shared the same view as Gail. She said:

"My attendance is always low and more so on Friday when the

test is given. Out of my twenty –one children I would have

twelve coming to school. It seems to be learnt behaviour. They

don't see it as important."

Unlike his two colleagues Roy had some positive experiences. He declared:

"Contrary to that, my students are very competitive

by nature. They are very enthusiastic about the written

test. They look forward to this type of assessment."

Additionally, there was some positive feedback from other teachers about how students responded to doing projects. Roy remarked:

"I think I have been seeing a lot of initiative shown

by students .They are very enthusiastic about doing the

research on their own, They are challenging themselves

and are actively involved in their own assessment.

Similarly, Pam also perceives positive results as students are actively involved in their own assessment by doing research. She added:

"They learn form early how to gather information. I think it

will be able to build their self esteem ,their whole self-efficacy

yuh know. You also seen not only the brilliant children being

developed through continuous assessment but each child

developing at his or her own pace."

Collaboration Concerns

Collaboration concerns focuses on teachers working together to promote the use of Continuous Assessment Programme. Collaboration concerns were emphasized by all teachers .They all agreed that they needed support for their classes in terms of implementing CAP.

Gail a standard four teacher held this view, she said:

> "At times I think there would be need for support. Last term
> our project was on production of kites .We brought in the
> ground man as resource personnel."

Roy a standard five teacher pointed out:

> "If you don't do that, we are limited in terms of technical
> expertise in certain areas."

Jane, a standard one teacher also subscribed to this view. She however was more detailed in her explanation, she said:

> "We need to source our resources for example, fire men,
> nurses etc."

Gail further stated

> "We need to strengthen our own data base with the parents
> so that we can know how they can help.

Pam , a standard two teacher declared :

> "Support is always needed-There should be a helper in the
> class as more emphasis is on group work and individual work.
> Also , we need resources for making charts-for display of student
> work.

Teachers felt that support from school administration was vital for the smooth transition of CAP at School X.

Roy complained:

> I don't think there was much support from administration.
> It was just a directive .There was no monitoring to see how well
> people were doing .You do it for yourself by trial and error more
> or less. There was no follow through. No opportunity for feedback
> when we meet as a staff. There was no support .There needs to be in
> order for CAP to be done efficiently in order to achieve the objectives.

Pam, a standard two teachers added:

> "Some workshops were done, but more on the implementation of
> CAP should be done."

The findings also revealed the extent to which teachers collaborated with each other about how to implement CAP.

Roy commented:

> "Everything was done informally .There was no structure.
>
> Even when we met to plan, we should have spoken about
>
> CAP. There was no collaboration to discuss the strengths
>
> and weaknesses and what could be done to improve."

Pam, a standard two teacher endorsed what Roy said .She remarked:

> "Not much collaboration was done. But at times it would be
>
> pointed out the ways for progress .There is little emphasis
>
> placed on successful strategies and results of National tests".

The other teachers of the study also shared the sentiments of their colleagues .They agreed that collaboration among members of staff is not embedded within the culture of school X even though they are aware of its importance.

Gail, a standard four teacher raised the question .She asked:

> "If everybody is the same confused state how can we support
>
> each other?"

Refocusing Concerns

Refocusing concerns emphasizes the benefits gained from the curriculum and includes major changes or alternative to the existing assessment (Hall& Hord, 2001).

These concerns were held by most of the teachers.

Pam, a standard two teacher said:

> "The CAP approach is good but we need to approach it
> incrementally .Trying to do too much may loose the real
> essence of CAP .It seems to have become too examination
> oriented."

Roy, a standard five teacher commented:

> "The primary objective of CAP is to get children engage in
> critical thinking and problem solving .It has helped me to
> remember that I need to focus on helping children develop
> these higher order skills."

Sita, a first year infant teacher declared:

> It encourages me to make the children go the extra mile.
> In this approach children are active learners. I want to see
> my children improve. I go the extra mile .It would be a
> reflection on myself on myself .It makes me know that I
> have to work harder.

Jane , a standard one teacher explained :

> "Children have to be actively engaged as oppose to the
> traditional method where the teacher was in charge."

Betty, a second year teacher responded by saying:

> With the CAP method .I can use more grouping. Peer
> grouping especially where the stronger ones help the
> weaker ones. The information children get they are able

to accept it from their friends rather than getting it from

me .This approach is more child-centered.

Gail, a standard five teacher endorsed what her colleagues had said but added another dimension.

She remarked:

Continuous assessment gives data as to competencies

attained. Therefore teachers will now have data to inform

whether they move on, reinforce or repeat concepts.

Additionally, teachers with the use of data are now able

to see individual differences in students and assess and

their individual learning styles and cater for those.

Refocusing the Continuous Assessment Programme must begin with the need for all teachers to have a conceptual understanding of all aspect of this assessment. Without this understanding, successful implementation of the change would be minimal. Teachers must believe the change would bring improvement in the learning of their students. Having an in depth understanding would result in its impact on the students .Since the goal of the schooling is to provide meaningful educational experiences for all students, the need for consistent and ongoing training is critical. This would allow for deeper understanding of the Continuous Assessment Programme at School X.

The study also found that the teachers viewed inadequate support from the Ministry of Education in the implementation of the CAP.

Jane, a standard one teacher said:

>"There is not enough support .It should be on going.
>
> Curriculum officers should come in regularly to give assistance."

Roy , a standard five teacher emphasized :

>"I kind of expected curriculum officers to me more proactive."

Gail, a standard four teacher commented:

>"The CAP manual of operations is insufficient in terms of
>
> implementing something that was new to us."

Summary of Findings

The findings from the analysis revealed a general consensus among teachers on the top down approach to the implementation of the National Continuous Assessment Programme at school X. The perceptions of teachers all indicated that they continue to have feelings of uncertainty in the implementation of CAP. Teachers expressed concerns about insufficient time for meeting the demands of the reform. Teachers were critical, finding several factors that militated against implementation. Teacher also felt that inadequate training coupled with the lack of monitoring of the CAP by the principal resulted in the program implemented at a superficial level. To sustain the viability of the reform teachers underscored the need for administrative support through continuous training and monitoring, provision of human and material resources by Ministry of Education and a great deal of sensitization and awareness to be created among parents.

Chapter 5

Summary, Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

Findings from the second research question are discussed in this chapter, using insights from the

conceptual framework presented in chapter 1, the research literature which was explored in

chapter 2 and 36 years experience of the researcher as participant observer in the system.

Recommendations are also submitted for improved practice, policy formation and

implementation.

Summary of Research Findings

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continuous training and monitoring, provision of human and material resources by Ministry of

Education and a great deal of sensitization and awareness to be created among parents.

Discussion

The conceptual framework indicated that CAP can be successful only if teachers are brought on board and the institutional framework of the education system provide the necessary support. This support must centre on teacher empowerment through staff development, policies and strong structures established by the Ministry of Education, provision of adequate resources as well as administrative support.

Since the 1990s, the Ministry of Education has accelerated its efforts to transform the education sector. In this regard, the MoE through the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) and IBRD Fourth Basic Education Programme has embarked on reform initiatives to improve the quality of education at early childhood centres, primary and secondary schools. These reform initiatives expanded when the country became signatory to the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action thus committing to providing education for all. As such schools were mandated to raise their level of effectiveness by engaging in the revision of curricula at the primary and secondary level.

The Ministry of Education is characterized by the top down approach. From my years of teaching in the system it appears that curriculum reforms have always been mandated. This is because our centralized educations system is controlled by the political directorate and is therefore vulnerable to the political dynamics. In many instances these curriculum initiatives are externally driven. The imperatives of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the United Nations International Children's Education Fund are the main catalysts behind the transformation thrust. These international bodies dictate how the money loan to developing

countries must be spent. Therefore in their quest to qualify for these loans, governments and policy makers find themselves "dancing to the tune" of these conglomerates.

Additionally the new world economy, which is driven by globalization and rapid technological advancement, compelles Trinidad and Tobago to transform its National Economy in order to survive in this dynamic world environment (Strategic Plan 2002- 2006).

It is interesting to note that the school is a sub-culture of the wider bureaucratic public service. The reality is that the wider public service has been influenced by a culture which tends to generate mechanistic structures and perceptions of bureaucratic orientations which

- ✓ Make it highly centralized

- ✓ Cause it to demand obedience from its employees by way of rigid rules, regulations and top down communication procedures.

Hall & Hord (2001) observed that people seem to prefer a vertical perspective when thinking about organizations and how they work. Currently, most changes are initiated from the top, increasingly this is the case as more and more mandates are passed down by state and local policy makers. These scholars further submitted that for change to succeed, a major shift in thinking by all participants is needed. The vertical paradigm must be replaced with a horizontal perspective in which all of the actors are viewed as being on the same plane.

The studies finding revealed that teachers were mandated to implement the Continuous Assessment Programme at School X.From the literature, it was understood that although mandates are continually criticized as being ineffective they can work well. The mandatory process falls down; however when the only time the change is supported is at the initial

announcement of the mandate. When a mandate is accompanied by continuous communication, ongoing training, on site coaching and time for implementation it can work well.(Hall and Hord 2001).

It is important to determine what accounted for the feelings of uncertainty among teachers at School X .Participant observation experience, has convinced the researcher that teachers were alone to conceptual the CAP ,to understand its complexities and to effectively organize and manage its tasks. The introduction of CAP required a shift from the traditional form of assessment which generally tends to assess lower order skills to assessment of higher order skills such as problem solving and critical thinking.

In order to have Continuous assessment of the child one must develop a feasible recording and reporting system. This however was new to the teachers and they had to do it by trial and error. From the researcher's experience in the system, the processes of analysis and reporting data have not been the culture of schools in Trinidad and Tobago. This form of assessment requires a great deal of accountability and a high degree of professionalism on the part of the teacher .As a result it posed a major challenge to them.

This is in keeping with the literature which states that the personal meanings of teachers are significant for the implementation of innovation. In the Concern-Based Adoption Model in the 1970s personal meanings stand central. Such feelings of uncertainty and doubt with regard to one's professional competence would negatively affect the degree to which teachers implement innovations (Geijsel et al 2001 pp. 134-135) and the degree to which they are prepared to exert themselves on behalf of such implementations.

Marris cited in Fullan (2001) argued that new experiences are always initially reacted to in the context of some familiar, reliable construction of reality in which people must be able to attach personal meaning to their experiences regardless of how meaningful they might be to others. The meaning of change will rarely be clear at the outset and ambivalence will pervade the transition .Any innovation cannot be assimilated unless meanings is shared (Marris, 1975, p. 121). Schon (1971) in Fullan (2001) has developed the same theme. He submitted that all real change involves passing through the zones of uncertainity, the situation of being lost of, confronting more than you can handle.

Teachers in the study identified certain factors that impeded the effective implementation of the Continuous Assessment Programme at School X .One such factor was inadequate training. This was due to the fact that the principal who was charged with the responsibility to provide initial training to the staff neglected to do so.

The conceptual framework argued that the CAP can be successful only if teachers are brought on board. Policies and structures must be put in place at the school level so that teachers can be empowered. This study submits that in order for teachers to implement the innovation effectively, the must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and competencies .Emphasis for their teachers is not only on the "what" but the "how" of change.

This leads to the notion of staff development which has a significant potential for influencing instructional effectiveness .Fullan (1991) cited in Kallon (2001) stressed staff development as a central theme related to change in practice. He maintained that the amount of training of staff is not necessarily related to the quality of implementation, but it can be if it combines pre-implementation training with assistance during implementation, and uses a variety of trainers. He

further emphasized that one-shot workshops prior to an event during implementation are not very useful. Research on implementation has demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt, that these processes of sustained interaction and staff development are crucial regardless of their intent of change.

Another factor which impeded the effective implementation of CAP was lack of collaboration among staff. The study has already submitted in the school context that teachers at School X work mainly in isolation. As participant observer at School X for a number of years, there was no attempt to foster collegial relationships before or even when the CAP was undertaken. From insights gained from the literature, participant observation experience and the data generated by the study has convinced the researcher that a possible explanation for their findings is related to the culture and climate of the school.

Realistically, provision for teachers to develop collegial relation has never been the culture of the school. It is the researcher's belief that structures and policies must be put in place. For example time must be provided for teachers to visit each other's classrooms, talk and share ideas about what pedagogy etc. Teachers talk about everything else except educational issues.

In fact, some teachers who have been trained along time ago have adopted the mentality that nothing has changed and that they don't need any further information. On the other hand, there are teachers who have developed themselves professionally. However, these teachers are seen by their counterparts as threats who may become critical of their practice and rock their comfort zone. As a result, the researcher was not surprised to find undercurrents of resentment among teachers in the school.

Against the understanding of all the above, the researcher puts the view that without collegial relations curriculum reform initiatives would not be worthwile.A reculturing of the school to facilitate collegiality requires the building of a high performance team. It necessitates changing some of the schools processes and timetabling to allow this to occur.

Indeed, the research literature is pregnant with the importance of collaborative work cultures and how they can lead to school change. Fullan cited in Sergiovanni, (1993) in summarizing the research on collegiality and school improvement writes:

> Since interaction with others influences what one does,
> relationships with other teachers are a critical variable.
> Change involves learning to so something new and interaction
> is the primary basis for social learning, new meanings, new skills,
> new behaviours and new beliefs depend significantly on whether
> teachers are working as isolated individuals (Goodlard , 1984:
> Lortie , 1975, Sarason 1982) or are exchanging ideas ,support and
> positve feelings about their work (Little , 1982 ; Mortimore et al ,
> 1988; Rosenholt, 1989).The quality of working relationships among
> teacher is strongly related to implementation.

Pratt (1999) confirmed that in collaboration teachers can talk about their professional proactive, observe others' teaching, develop curriculum cooperatively and teach eachother.Clearly one of the roles of Educational leaders is to bring about an environment in which teacher cooperation and collaboration will flourish.

It must be borne in mind that perceptions of the work environment can affect teacher performance. A serious problem identified by the study was a lack of administrative support.

This administrative support was viewed at two levels, - the micro level i.e. the school and the macro level – the system.

Teachers spoke of the need for monitoring and evaluating the CAP by the principal. They felt that there was no opportunity for feedback to the staff concerning the implementation of the programme. Roy in particular felt that in all fairness to the principal that this was due to the lack of training. Although the perception is that the principal could not initiate the implementation because of the lack of training, it is the researcher's belief that the principal being the instructional leader, needed to be more aggressive in the approach to the implementation and monitoring of the CAP. It was in the principal's interest to avail himself or herself of the opportunity for training.

It is important to note that, in the initial stages in CAP that principal and district supervisors were charged with the responsibility of monitoring the CAP. However, the responsibility of the success of the CAP is not jus the major concern of the principal and supervisor. It is the man concern of the Ministry of Education. For CAP to be implemented successfully, after training, it is impossible to separate teachers, principals and supervisors in their function. Cooperative problem solving and mutual planning by all members of the team that is principals, teachers and supervisors must foster healthy interactions which would produce the required outcomes.

 According to consensus in the literature, support is a necessary element of successfully combating the failure associated with change. Without support from administration during the

initial stages of change, teachers can easily return to the comfort zone of traditional teaching. One would expect, therefore, that it is essential to have the principal's support during this time. The principal must be able to understand that school improvement cannot be successful without investing time in planning brainstorming and staff development.

This conclusion was based on insights from the literature .All major research on innovation and school effectiveness shows that the principal strongly influences the likelihood of change, but it also indicates that most principals do not play instructional or change leadership roles.Berriam and Mc Laughlin (1977) cited in Fullan (2001) found that projects having the active support of the principal were the most likely to fare well. The principal is the person to most likely be in a position to shape the organizational conditions necessary for success, such as the development of shared goals collaborative work structures and climates and procedure for monitoring results.

Principals must be made to recognize the important role they have to play in the reform process. They have to serve as role models and give symbolic tangible support to the Ministry of Education.On the other hand some teachers seem averse to reform and school improvement initiatives; they consume too much time and energy. Further, their commitment levels do not encourage them to professionally support these initiatives. Teachers also have a part to play .Without commitment to their schools, student learning and their own professional development, much of the power of education reform will be wasted.

From another perspective teachers also indicated that there was lack of support form parents. It must be recognized that several explanations may exist for the findings. Teachers were of the view that parents were not sensitized or educated as to their role in the implementation of CAP.

Betty was critical of the Ministry of Education and felt that it was the responsibility of this institution to inform parents about the nature of CAP and how it operates in schools.

Of course, it can be argued that the diffusion of the innovation was not handled properly by the Ministry of Eduation.According to Rogers (1995) diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels, overtime , among the members of a social group. It is a certain type of communication concerned with the spread of messages that are new ideas. However, also to be considered is the reality that the school has an even greater responsibility that parents are informed about this curriculum change.

The research is very clear about the benefits, indeed the necessity of parent in engagement .Coleman (1998) cited in Fullan (2001) argued that student commitment to schooling (or engagement in learning is primarily shaped by parents through the curriculum of the home; Coleman concludes that student commitment can be indeed sustained and strengthened by collaborative teacher attitudes, expressed in and through the practices; strong connections with the home are essential to the tasks.

It is no secret that strong parental involvement is essential for school success .A report by the National School Public Association (NSPA) examined the connection. Parent and family involvement show that improved parental involvement leads to higher academic achievement better attendance and improved behaviour at home.

Fullan (2001) has argued that one of the fundamental tenets of implementation of curriculum innovation is a change in materials .The study's findings revealed that a lack of resources was a major issue for teachers in the implementation of CAP. Carol spoke about the unavailability and

inaccessibility of the internet and multi-media while other teachers complained about the resources such as filing cabinets and stationery.

The conceptual framework accepts that in order for CAP to be successfully implemented adequate resources must be provided. Additionally, the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (T&TUTA) argued that certain pre-requisites must be put in place to support the innovation .The reality is that the Ministry of Education required that teachers implement CAP but failed to provide the necessary resources to do so.

According to the research literature the nature and quality of the curriculum offered in school is related to the resources which are available and most importantly how well they are used. Mention was made of not only material resources, but of importance too was the human resource and that of time .Jane as well as other teachers emphasized the need for the teacher's aid to assist in the classroom. Perhaps this deficiency can be overcome by government providing substitute teachers as is presently done in developed countries such as England and United States. Although this is the researcher's point of view it can only be realized in the long term. In the case of school X, it is the researcher's belief that this deficiency can be overcome if the principal organize staffing in an effective way by using some teachers who are underutilized as substitute teachers. It is hoped with the Ministry of Education emphasis on excellence in education, this international trend can be articulated in Trinidad and Tobago. Perhaps if this initiative is implemented in schools, teachers would be given the necessary support in terms of time for preparation of work, teacher pupil conferencing, and parent teacher conferencing and staff development.

A major time commitment is necessary to achieve change. According to the teachers in the study this innovation requires a great deal of extra time investment for them. If change is important, a provision of extra time is necessary to allow teachers to work through the change both individually and with their peers.

Conclusion

The literature has been used to show that assessment is an integral part of the teaching learning process. A great deal has been said about the current changes in assessment practices which focus on alternative rather that traditional assessment. One such type of assessment that has plagued the educational landscape in recent years is continuous assessment. This type of assessment has been implemented internationally, regionally and locally. Mention was made of the top down approach to education reform initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago. The literature has been used to show that teacher perceptions, concerns, feelings and beliefs can be related to the successful implementation of an innovation. It is the belief of the researcher that we must consider ways and means of brining stakeholders on board particularly, teachers and administrative when introducing reform. On the basis of the findings and the discussion generated in the study, it may be argued that greater and more expert attention needs to be paid to policy formation and implementation as they impact on teacher performance as it relates to the effective implementation of the CAP not only at school X, but in schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

Recommendations

Based on what this study has revealed the following recommendations have been provided for any attempts designed to bring about improvement and effective implementation of CAP at School X.

Teacher concerns about the implementation of CAP was examined in the context of the existing culture and organizational structures of School X .Teacher concerns ,it should be noted was defined in terms of training, administrative support, collegiality, parental involvement and resources.

Staff Development

It would seem from the findings on teacher concerns in the study that sufficient attention is not being directed to teacher training in the school study. For this to be realized, however it is recommended that continuous and ongoing (internal and conducted by experts) staff and administrative development so that CAP can be institutionalized and sustained. Indeed, the Ministry of Education (MoE) must support the professional development that change requires.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The findings of the study revealed that lack of monitoring and evaluating by the principal as well by Ministry official was lacking .The research literature assures that assessment can be a major contributor to the change process itself .At the process level various forms of assessments and monitoring tools can help facilitators learn how to work with individuals .At the policy level, assessments of the potential to determine where linkages and support are most needed. It is therefore submitted. That school administration and the Ministry of Education formulate policies

and structures to monitor and evaluate CAP at School X as well as school in Trinidad and Tobago.

Principal Leadership

At the school level the principal has become increasingly important the literature highlights the fact that the principal has always been the "gate keeper of change". It is therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education formulate and implement training and Development strategies to equip principals with the necessary skills and competencies. It is also suggested that principals must assume responsibility for their professional development, so that they can be empowered to become leaders in a culture of change.

Parental Involvement

From the study, it can be concluded that parental involvement is a key factor in implementing CAP. Schools cannot begin to meet the needs of pupils without help from parents. The literature reminds us that student learning increases when parents participate in decision making that affects their children .It is therefore submitted that strong partnerships be forged between the school and the home by allowing parents to be part of the schools management team.

Collegiality

It would seem from the findings that sufficient attention is not being directed to the role of collegial factors in determining implementation. The literature refers to numerous studies that document the fact that professional learning communities or collaborative work cultures at the school are critical for the implementation of reforms .This type of evidence suggests that among

other things that the principal promote and develop an ethos of collegiality at School X. This can be done by employing techniques such as pair coaching, teacher leaders and clinical supervision.

Resources

Resources have been defined in terms of human material financial and time .Ongoing resources are an important part of making change work. The understanding, therefore, must be if CAP is to be successfully implemented in schools, the district offices should operate as resource centers to facilitate the professional needs of principals and teachers also the Ministry of Education must provide the resources to support the educational change.

Again it is submitted that these recommendations cannot emerge on their own strength .The abilities of teachers principals parents and the Ministry of Education through its policies and structures, and monitoring of schools are closely related to their (recommendations) successful implementation and practice.

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Appendix A:

Sample of T&TUTA's Prerequisites for CAP

Appendix B:

Stages of Concern about the Innovation: Paragraph Definitions

(Hall & Hord, 2001, p.63)

Stages of Concern about the Innovation: Paragraph Definitions

6. **Refocusing**: The focus is on exploration of more universal benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of major changed or replacement with a more powerful alternative. Individual has definite ideas about alternatives to the proposed or existing form of innovation.

5. **Collaboration**: The focus is on coordination and cooperation with others regarding use of the innovation.

4. **Consequence:** Attention focuses on the impact of the innovation on clients in his or her immediate sphere of influence. The focus is on relevance of the innovation for clients, evaluation of outcome including performance and competencies, and changes needed to increase client outcomes.

3. **Management:** Attention is focused on the processes and tasks of using the innovation and the best use of information and resources. Issues related to efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling, and time demands are utmost.

2. **Personal:** Individual is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his/her inadequacy to meet those demands, and his/her role with the innovation. This includes analysis of his/her role in relation to the reward structure of the organization, decision-making, and consideration of potential conflicts with existing structures or personal commitment. Financial or status implications of the program for self and colleagues may also be reflected.

1**. Informational:** A general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more detail about its indicated. The person seems to be unworried about him/her in relation to the innovation. She/he is interested in substantive aspects of the innovation in a selfless manner, such as general characteristics, effects and requirements for use.

0. **Awareness:** Little concern about or involvement with the innovation is indicated.

From Measuring *Stages of Concern about the Innovation*: A manual for Use of the SoC Questionnaire (Report No. 3032) (p.000) by G.E. Hall, A. A. George, and W. L. Rutherford, 1979, Austin: The University of Texas at Austin, Research and Development Centre for Teacher Education (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.ED.147 342).

Appendix C:

 Letter to Principal from the Candidate requesting permission to conduct study at the school.

Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct Study at the School.

Pommegranate Avenue,

Malabar Phase I

Malabar,

Arima.

Mrs. Sharon James Clunis,

Principal,

Malabar Government Primary School

Pommegranate Avenue

Malabar Phase I

Malabar, Arima.

Dear Madam,

I am presently reading for the M.Ed. (concentration in curriculum) programme at the University of the West Indies where I am in the process of completing the Course ED 6900 Project Report.

To satisfy the University's requirements for this course, I am required to conduct a research into a matter of concern and write a report.

In this regard, I would like to report on teacher perceptions on the implementation of the National Continuous Assessment Programme at the School. This reason for the subject choice is that I have experienced certain concerns that need to be clarified concerning the implementation of the CAP. It is my belief that other teachers may also be having similar experiences which they too may need to have addressed. Therefore, I feel feedback from this exercise could lend itself to staff development, which will assist our teachers as well as school administration to better understand the process in the implementation of the Continuous Assessment Programme.

I am therefore seeking your permission and assistance in conducting this exercise. Your support will be greatly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,

Marva Dowrich.

Appendix D:

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

1) The Ministry of Education is very active about Continuous Assessment. They are using it to assess schools. What do you really know about the Continuous Assessment Programme and how it works in school?

2) How do you feel about MoE emphasis on CAP in schools?

3) Do you think that such an initiative is useful for enhancing student learning? If your answer is yes, say how. If no, say why.

4) What are some of your concerns about the way it was implemented in our school?

Need:

1) Why do you think it was necessary to implement this form of assessment?

2) How is this type of assessment relevant to our schools?

Clarity:

1) How is this form of assessment different from the traditional assessment?

2) What are some of the changes you had to make in implementing this form of assessment?

3) Did any of your beliefs in teaching change in implementing this form of assessment? In what way?

4) Has there been any change in teacher /child role? Can you describe the change if any?

Self concerns:

1) Do you need more information about any aspects of this form of assessment .Which will help you with its implementation?

2) Do you need any help with the implementation of CAP?

3) Some people would say that CAP would affect their comfort zone .To what extent would you say that CAP is affecting you comfort zone?

Task Concerns:

1) Are there any areas of CAP that are challenging or irrelevant? Explain

2) Do the teachers have sufficient time to prepare?

3) Are the resources (material, human, financial and time) adequate?

Impact /Consequences:

1) Have you any concerns about how the CAP has impacted on the students?

2) Do the children look forward to this kind of assessment?

3) Are there changes in their behaviour as they engage in this form of assessment?

Impact /Collaboration:

1) Do you need support for your class in terms of implementing the Continuous Assessment Programme?

2) What support from school administration did you receive in implementing CAP?

3) Has there been collaboration with your colleagues with the progress of the new approach to assessment?

4) Is planning done with your colleagues? How?

Impact/ Refocusing:

1) Do you know of any other approach that might work better than what you are doing now?

2) To what extent would you argue that CAP has been causing teachers to change their approach to:

   a. Teaching

   b. Understanding how children learn

   c. Getting students to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving

Appendix E:

Sample of transcripts showing unit of analysis

LIST OF EMERGING THEMES

RED   PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

GREEN   TRAINING

BLUE   ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

GOLD   RESOURCES

ORANGE   FEELING OF UNCERTAINTY

PURPLE   LACK OF COLLABORATION

Excerpts from Focus Group Interview

Sarah (Interviewer)

Sarah – Question 1

Are there any areas of CAP that are challenging or irrelevant? Explain

Roy:

– I have an exam class. With the demands of the project it has been very difficult to allow time to do a comprehensive project with the demands of administration and the Ministry of Education. I have to teach the syllabus. It has been challenging in terms of the project and other aspects of CAP. I'll have to revisit it again.

Pam:

– I would disagree that we have to teach the syllabus. We teach the child and not the syllabus, we teach the child and take the child as far as we can take them. There are times even when we have an exam class we may not get through certain things, but whatever we do would have done so that the child would have grasp the concept.

Roy:

– I don't mean, I mean I have to cover certain objectives.At the end of the day pupils will have to write an exam .They have to master certain skills to execute the exam. I had to go into depth with some of the specific objectives so that they will achieve .I did it but at the expense of the project and other aspects of CAP.I was a bit lackadaisical in terms of doing CAP because of the demand of the exam.

Sarah – Question 2

How do you feel about the MoE emphasis on CAP in schools?

Gail:

- Taking into consideration the benefits of CAP and how students can be appropriately assessed so that teachers can inform instruction to come because it is continuous, and assessment has to do with knowing where the students are and being able to help them with instruction and so on .Seeing that is the focus then it should be encouraged.

Pam:

- It also gives the child expectations and because of the continuous assessment the child is actively involved, building the child's self-esteem etc. and therefore it is a more appropriate way of assessing a child than just the paper and pencil test.

Jane:

- I think it is a lot of work and for it to be really successful what I am thinking about in the long term, teachers would have to specialize. If you are focusing on Language Arts or Mathematics. Teachers might have time to check students work more in-depth while a qualified helper can carry on with your class.

Betty:

- I think they mean well. I think it is something that has been copied from North America, but like everything else when we start something in Trinidad, we don't have things in place. That is going to be the downfall of CAP. We always copy something from

somewhere else and we don't have anything to back it up. That is my grouse about the whole thing.

Jane:

– We have to mark the weekly tests and you must have the children otherwise engaged. Somebody should be there to carry on with your class –qualified help needed e.g. teachers' aid.

Carol:

– I think it is progressive and that the MoE is interested not only in longitudinal goals of Education i.e. not only to pass the Secondary Entrance Assessment examination , but that "No child be left Behind"

Sarah- Question 7

What are some of the changes you had to make in implementing this form of assessment?

Carol:

- I had to change my monthly tests to weekly tests and also much of the projects were done at school.

Roy:

- I had to revisit the time-table.

Jane:

- A lot of paperwork .I had to spend more time in preparation

Gail:

- Whatever project in order to evaluate it calls for time. It is time-consuming

Sarah – Question 8

Did any of your beliefs in teaching change in implementing this form of assessment? In what way?

Betty:

- At first when we had to do it and we did not know what it was about and we did not have any guidelines at least for me. It was like what it is you are doing? The first time I did it, it was horrible. But eventually, like when you did it the second and third time them you see what it really was about and how helpful it would be to you and the children.

Roy:

- I think deep down inside we know this is the way we should go about when the actual implementation of this thing with the book with different areas for attention there were some "hiccups."

Pam:

- I think also it made me pay more attention to how children learn .Their learning styles , multiple intelligences and individual differences

Sarah – Question 9

Do you need more information about any aspect of this form of assessment which will help with its implementation?

Betty:

- I think I would like to know more about the use of the cumulative record cards.

Carol:

- I would like more information on project and portfolios

Sarah – Question 10

Do you need any help with the implementation of CAP?

Betty:

- You would always need help. The way we had to manage it we had to learn the hard way by trial and error.

Gail:

- I feel comfortable ,I have come to realize that most of what they are asking you to do with the CAP book is what we have been doing all along .You have been looking at the children's participation and behaviour but now you have the demands place upon you to document. You have been doing the test with children looking for their weaknesses and how they can improve. It requires a little adjustment in terms of recording .

Betty

- Doing the project is very challenging. You don't get support from children and parents to bring in resources.

Gail:

- I think the formation of a portfolio and profile, a file on each student is part of CAP.I am not certain, but I have not been doing that.

Sarah -Question 2

Do teachers have the necessary skills to implement CAP?

Betty:

– I think we gain the skills by trial and error .Training should have come before.

Jane:

– We always need to be updated.

Gail:

– Yes, all trained teachers should have those skills; however, occasionally some workshop training may be necessary to sharpen them.

Sarah – Question 3

Are the resources (material, human, financial, time) adequate?

Carol:

- Technical resources, no, the internet should be accessible to teachers. There should not be a time period in which the computer room is closed. I know it has to be monitored and everything is open to abuse because things breakdown. We are in the information age children have to be exposed to certain skills; teachers also have to have access to the things. They are going to provide us with these skills. The use of technology , multimedia .Teacher don't know how to use it .In 2008 we should get away from the concept of writing on the blackboard.

Pam:

- It is not that we don't know how to use the technology .It is not accessible.

Gail:

- No, we need human resources to assist with the clinical aspect of recording and tabulating .If the student profiles are necessary then secure storage for files are needed.

Betty:

- No, place for referrals. Even if you make referrals to the principal nothing is done .It seems you are spinning top in mud.

Sarah – Question 4

Do teachers have sufficient time to prepare?

Jane:

– No, we need more time for planning and for conferencing with students.

Roy:

– We have these records. We don't have time to analyze what data means. To see what the scores really mean for the child.

Gail:

– No, relief time is needed for thorough preparation, timely correction of weekly tests so that evaluations can be made in a timely manner.

Sarah – Question 3

Do you need support for your class in terms of implementing the CAP?

Gail:

– At times I think there would be need for support .Last term our project was on the production of kites and we brought in the groundsmen. It depends on what you are doing you may not have the expertise .You may need to source some people from the community to help.

Roy:

– If you don't do that we are limited in terms of technical expertise in certain areas.

Pam:

– Support is always needed, helper in the class as more emphasis is on group work and individual work. Resources for making charts –for display of students' work.

Gail:

– It brings to the fore that we need to strengthen our data base with our parents.

Sarah – Question 4

What support from school administration did you receive in implementing CAP?

Roy:

– I don't think there was .It was just a directive .There was no monitoring to see how well people were doing, no follow through no opportunity for feedback, when we met as a staff. There was no support .This was needed in order for CAP to be done efficiently so as to achieve the objective.

Pam:

– More workshops should have been conducted on the implementation of CAP.

Gail:

– I think that administration through the Parent Teachers' Association or parent meeting can inform the parents, educate them about their role with children at home preparing

with projects, what CAP is about and why it is important for them to be at school for the weekly test and things like that.

Roy:

– In fairness to the administrator, the CAP was new to her as well .We needed to have professional development workshops so that we will know we are on the right track. Some people are still fishing wondering if they are doing this thing the right way .There is no collaboration we are not meeting to discuss best practices.

Sarah – Question 11

To what extent would you say that CAP is affecting your comfort zone?

Betty:

– It affected my comfort zone especially at the beginning .I have to spend more time planning giving up my personal time

Roy:

– It did affect my comfort zone .I had to spend more time .Time I would have spent doing other things.

Carol:

– Yes, I have to be more organized .More accountability required.

Gail:

– Yes, but not to a great extent because although some aspects of CAP are now mandatory i.e. project work, I have come to value the rationale behind it.

Jane:

– Yes, I have to use some of my spare time for planning .It interferes with my housework.

Sarah – Question 5

Has there been collaboration with the progress of the new approach to assessment?

Pam:

– Not much but at times it would be pointed out the ways for progress .Emphasis on how we can improve using different approaches, but little emphasis is placed on successful strategies and results.

Roy:

– Everything was done informally .There was no kind of structure .Even when we met to plan too we should have talked about assessment .No collaboration to discuss strengths or weaknesses. What could be done to improve?

Sita:

– We discuss sometimes

Betty:

– What I found was even though we all had a manual everybody was interpreting what was in the book differently so that made it difficult.

Gail:

– If everybody in the same confused state- how can we support each other?